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MODERN

IN

Sixty Twentieth-Century

Edited by Christina Stea

and published by

INTRODUCTION BY

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E VERE STACPOOLE • CHRISTINA STEAD • GERTRUDE STEIN • F

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WOMEN

LOVE

Masterpieces of Fiction

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INTRODUCTION

THE word "love" has, in our time, been so lightly and so loosely employed that it seems to be thoroughly debased. It has all too often been used as a synonym, if not a substitute, for spurious and contrived romances; it has become a lying word, a commercial term, a trade mark for quick-selling merchandise. It has acquired a smirk, a bedside manner, and has exchanged passion and even sentiment for responses which are as casual as they are crass.

Yet modern literature, with its emphasis on unflinching honesty and unpredictable variety, runs counter to the formula. It demands continual awareness, a constant reappraisal of the word "love"—and this collection is both a repudiation of false standards and a recognition of new values. To accomplish the double purpose, two distinguished authors have turned to some of the best contemporary writing, and their book is characterized by an intricacy as well as an intensity which expresses—and analyzes—a period in flux.

The most cursory glance at the table of contents indicates that the editors have ranged widely in language and geography; they have ransacked the recent treasures not only of England and America, but of France and Germany, Austria, Italy, and Russia. Their taste—a fine balance of catholicity and discrimination—has permitted an even wider scope: a psychological as well as an international range, a multiform, even a kaleidoscopic, picture of modern love. They place their emphasis on the clash of shifting emotions in an unstable world, on the rapid mutations, the enigmas, perversities and "byways" of desire. They are, tangentially at least, appraising their epoch—the scant first half of the twentieth century—but they are not judging it. Some of their inclusions may, in another fifty years, seem sterile, dead sea fruit, but even these pieces reflect the waywardness and insecurity of their times.

Rarely, if ever, has there been a compilation so unsparing and yet so understanding. Here is not merely an assembly, but a slowly revolving pattern of many angles and facets, an anthology which is also—if such a thing can be imagined—a passionate geometry in which there is no simple Q.E.D. The keynote is complexity. The pages run from the purest virtue to the most debased *voyeurism,* from natural fulfillment to almost insane frustration. Here are nuances as delicate as the excerpt from Rosamond Lehmann's half-lit *Dusty Answer* and statements as brutal as those in Henry de Montherlant's *Pity for Women,* as tender as Helen Thomas's idyllic tribute to her poet-husband in *As It Was* and as terrifying as François Mauriac's *The Leper's Kiss.* As Jacques Chardonne says in *Eva,* that painful vivisection of marriage, self-deluded and self-doomed, "There is no way into another human being except through love."

The book grows not only by accretion but by its contrasts. It is as though an intricate design were being shaped from disparate and contrary fragments. The large mosaic is formed of such small but significant units as the ironically scientific analysis of sex in Robert Briffault's disintegrating *Europa,* with its exposure of the virgin who gives herself without passion, even without purpose; the dream-like but vivid seduction in Artzibashev's *Sanine;* the jangled nerves and angry malaise of Conrad Aiken's "By My Troth, Nerissa"; Raymond Radiguet's *The Devil in the Flesh,* a half-naïf, half-shocking story of a fifteen-year-old boy's liaison with a young married woman whose husband is fighting at the front; the pathetic deception and lying sincerity of Leonhard Frank's *Carl and Anna;* the hard calculating Hollywood viciousness of Aben Kandel's "You Twinkle Only Once"; the incongruous beauty, defeated and indomitable, banal and mystical, with the desperate need of communication (even where there is no response) which sustains Carson McCullers' "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud."; the innocent rusticity of Erskine Caldwell's "Crown-Fire"; the raw and horrifying crisis from W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage;* the frail elegance and foolish artifice depicted in Katherine Mansfield's "Marriage à la Mode"; the warm hypnotic earthiness of Meridel Le Sueur's "The Girl"; the frayed end of a cycle and death of a society in Dorothy Parker's devastating "Dusk Before Fireworks"; the exquisite and almost painful poetry—a mingling of anguish and ecstasy—of D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow,* that novel written with "the hot blood's blindfold art"; the vicious pleasure in corruption projected in Heinrich Mann's *The Land of Cockaigne;* the extraordinarily sensitive mood of Evelyn Scott's *The Narrow House;* the futile gentility—politeness at cross-purposes—in E. M. Forster's *Howard's End;* the decadent confusion of comedy and misery in Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way;* Virginia Woolf's unusually forthright "The Legacy," a powerfully repressed and dramatically released story of frustration; the proud abnegation in Glenway Wescott's "A Guilty Woman"; the ingenuous wonder and frank narcissism of Mary MacLane's autobiographical love affair with the devil; the murdering madness in Julien Green's violent melodrama *The Dark Journey;* the sensual self-love of Jacqueline in Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe;* the degradation of the lady libertine rendered in the desperate and drunken monolog of Tess Slesinger's *The Unpossessed,* a period piece of careless love, lost love, lust without love; the regimented and enforced brusqueness of "free" sexuality in Panteleimon Romanov's "Without Cherry Blossom" pitted against the unspoiled freshness—part pastoral, part fairy tale—of H. de Vere Stacpoole's *The Blue Lagoon;* Gertrude Stein's uncannily detailed yet simplified portrayal of "Melanctha"; James Joyce's illuminated insight shot through the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;* Colette's inimitable blend of sadness and sophistication; Frank Swinnerton's genre painting in *Nocturne;* Aldous Huxley's paradox of fleshly appetite and revulsion, fear and fascination, in the segment from *Antic Hay;* the dark and driving power of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*; W. L. George's detached study of an English prostitute in *A Bed of Roses*; and (to draw this catalog to a close without exhausting the table of contents) the crowded gaiety of the Breughel-like wedding scene from Christina Stead's *For Love Alone,* which has been added at the request of the writer of these lines.

Thus it is immediately apparent that the editors have not relied upon the inevitable bedside tales, the set-pieces, the hackneyed stand-bys, which fill the conventional "Treasuries" with the over-familiar. They have not included everything, or nearly everything they may have hoped to reprint. The severe birth control exercised by publishers makes it impossible to represent every author who might be worthy of inclusion. This anthology, like every other anthology, is a compromise between the complete and perfect compendium existing in the editor's mind and the compilation permitted by the hydra-headed ogres who control the permissions department in all the publishing houses. But it is equally obvious that the editors, with their own criteria and remarkable rightness of choice, enrich the reader's experience. The skillfully condensed notes, the supplementary "guides," the very division of the volume into two parts—the first of which might be classified as organized love, and the second (which is devoted to the perverse and insoluble problems) to what might be called disorganized love—add to one's comprehension.

The stories contained in the book are more than stories. They are strange, sometimes secret, and always revealing episodes of life beneath the surface, beyond the event. In each case the editors go straight to the core; their labors consist not only in selecting but in probing. Again and again they expose crucial situations: the book is literally a series of contrasting climaxes.

Although the volume is important psychologically, it never lacks entertainment. It is deeply thoughtful; but it is also, by the very nature of the work, continually exciting. This is not surprising, for the excitement is engendered by the very play and purpose of conflicting emotions. Sensitively presented, here is a cross-section of some of the best reading as well as some of the best literature of our times. Although there have been many collections devoted to the passion misleadingly called tender, here is an unparalleled examination of man's dominating theme and his desire to compose new variations upon it. These pages suggest how intensely vivid and infinitely varied his efforts can be.

Louis Untermeyer

EDITORS' NOTE

For the reader's enjoyment, we have provided a background for each selection. In every case, the author has been situated, and in addition, wherever necessary, the setting has been given, so that the selection may be read with complete clarity. Asterisks in the text, of course, indicate a passage of time.

C. S.
W. B.

PART ONE

BOOK I: *Youth*

NOTE ON RAYMOND RADIGUET'S

"THE DEVIL IN THE FLESH"

The novel is presented as autobiography, the recitant being a French boy of twelve in the year 1914. The absence of fathers and brothers at the front meant a four-year holiday for the young lads of France, who enjoyed their excessive liberty.

At fifteen, the recitant falls in love with Marthe Grangier, a girl of eighteen engaged to Jacques Lacombe, a soldier at the front. The hero accompanies her when she purchases her trousseau and furniture and guides her choice. She has to tell lies in order to cover up their meetings.

A month after Marthe's marriage to Lacombe, the hero receives an invitation from the young bride. He goes to her house—the setting for our selection.

RAYMOND RADIGUET

The Devil in the Flesh

Born in a Paris suburb, Raymond Radiguet (1903-23) came to the French capital at fifteen years of age, with some reputation as a poet. Befriended by such writers as Jean Cocteau and Max Jacob, he proved a natural sophisticate—like the infant of the Bab Ballads who was born "with a miniature glass in his eye." Radiguet rejected the romantic and the contrived in fiction for the uncompromising and the direct. His first novel, *The Devil in the Flesh* (1921), written when he was not quite eighteen, pictures the love of a boy of fifteen for a girl of eighteen whose husband is a soldier at the front. Its admirers include the most discriminating of critics. Aldous Huxley declared that Radiguet had achieved the literary control that other writers attain only after a long career. François Mauriac observed that the book is "unretouched and seems shocking, but nothing so resembles cynicism as clairvoyance. No adolescent before Radiguet has delivered to us the secret of that age: we have all falsified it." Radiguet sought to state classically the complex sources of simple action; and in his second novel his method grew increasingly austere. His brilliant promise was cut short by typhoid fever, which carried him off at twenty.

LITTLE by little, my mind turned drowsy and dull beside her, and I found her different. Now that I was sure that I no longer loved her, I began to love her. I felt myself incapable of all those calculations and maneuverings which, until then and at that very moment even, I thought that love could not dispense with. All at once, I felt a better man. This brusque change would have opened the eyes of anyone else, but I did not see that I was in love with Marthe. On the contrary, I saw therein proof that my love had died, and that a beautiful friendship was taking its place. This long prospect of friendship made me suddenly aware of how criminal any other sentiment would have been: injuring a man who loved her, and to whom she belonged, and who could not see her.

Still another thing should have acquainted me with my true feelings. Several months before, when I met Marthe daily, my so-called love did not prevent me from passing judgment on her, nor from thinking hideous most of the things she thought beautiful, and childish most of the things she said. To-day, if I happened to disagree with her, I thought it was I who was in the wrong. After the grossness of my first desires, it was now the delicacy of a deeper sentiment which deceived me. I felt incapable of undertaking any of the things I had promised myself to do. I was beginning to respect Marthe because I was beginning to love her.

I returned every evening. It never came into my head to ask her to show me her bedroom, and still less to ask her how Jacques liked our furniture. I desired nothing beyond this eternal betrothal, our bodies stretched out before the fire, touching each another, and I not daring to move for fear a single false gesture would put our happiness to flight.

But Marthe, reveling as I did in this charm, believed she was alone in her enjoyment. In my lazy happiness, she read indifference. Thinking that I did not love her, she imagined that I would soon have enough of this silent parlor, unless she did something to attach me to her.

We were silent. In this I saw a proof of our contentment.

I felt so close to Marthe, knowing that at the same time we thought of the same things, that to have spoken to her would have seemed to me absurd. As if one spoke aloud when quite alone. But this silence was more than the poor child could bear. The wise course would have been to have made use of communication as vulgar as word and gesture, deploring that there existed no subtler means.

Seeing me sink daily deeper and deeper into this delicious speechlessness, she imagined that I was growing more and more bored. She was ready to go to any extreme to divert me.

With her hair unloosened, she loved to sleep before the fire. Or rather, I thought that she was sleeping. Her sleep was but a pretext to put her arms around my neck, and, once awakened, to tell me with moist eyes that she had just had a sad dream. She would never tell me this dream. I took the opportunity this feigned sleep offered to breathe in her hair, her neck, her burning cheeks, scarcely touching them so that she would not awake. Such caresses were not, as one might think, a casual expression of love, but on the contrary, were tokens of the most exquisite passion. And I, I thought that my friendship allowed them to me. But I began to despair at the realization that love alone gives us rights upon a woman. I could well do without love, I thought, but I could not do without some claim upon Marthe. And so as to have that right, I was willing to go to the extreme measure of love, even while deploring it. I desired Marthe, but this I did not know.

When she slept thus, with her head upon my arm, I leaned over to gaze upon her flame-lit face. This was a perilous game. One day I came too near, although my face did not touch hers, and I felt I was like the needle which trespasses by one millimeter upon forbidden territory and thus becomes the magnet's prey. Is the magnet or the needle to blame? Thus it was that I felt my lips on hers.

Her eyes were still closed, but like those of someone not asleep. I kissed her, aghast at my own audacity, while in reality it had been Marthe who had drawn my head down against her mouth. Her two hands clung about my neck; had she been ship-wrecked, she would not have clung more desperately. And I did not know if she wished me to save her, or if she wished us to drown together.

Then she sat up, took my head in her lap, and caressed my hair. Again and again she said softly to me: "You must go away and never come back." For my part, I dared not say "tu" to her, and when I could no longer keep silent, I chose my words with care, forming my sentences so that I need not address her directly, for if I could not say "tu," still less could I say "vous."

My tears scalded me. If one fell upon Marthe's hand, I expected to hear her cry aloud. I blamed myself for having broken the charm, told myself that I had been mad to press my lips to hers, forgetting that it was she who had kissed me. "You must go away and never come back." My tears of rage now mingled with my tears of grief. So is the snared wolf injured as much by his own fury as by the trap. Had I spoken, it would have been to insult Marthe. My silence worried her; she interpreted it as resignation. "Since it is too late," I fancied she was thinking (and I was, in my injustice, perhaps not far wrong after all), "I am just as pleased that he suffer a bit." I shivered before the fire, and my teeth shook in my head. To my real distress, which came from childhood, were added childish feelings. I was the spectator who did not wish to leave because the dénouement displeased him. I said to Marthe:

"I won't go. You have been making fun of me. I never want to see you again."

For if I did not wish to go home to my parents, neither did I wish to see Marthe. I would rather have driven her from her own house!

But she sobbed: "You are a child! You don't understand that if I ask you to leave it's because I love you!"

I told her spitefully that I understood very well that she had duties to respect and that her husband was at the war.

She shook her head: "Before I knew you, I was happy. I thought I loved my fiancé. I forgave him for not understanding me. It was you who showed me that I didn't love him. My duty is not the one you think. It isn't that I must not lie to my husband, but that I must not lie to you. Go, and don't think me a wicked woman; you'll soon have forgotten me. I don't want to ruin your life! I'm crying because I'm too old for you!"

This declaration of love was sublime in its childishness. And whatever passions were to follow after, never again would I have the adorable experience of seeing a young girl of nineteen weep because she was too old.

The flavor of the first kiss had disappointed me, as does a fruit one tastes for the first time. It is not from the new, but from the habitual that we derive our greatest pleasures. In a few moments I found that I had not only grown accustomed to Marthe's mouth, but that I could no longer do without it. And she was then talking of depriving me of it forever!

That evening Marthe walked back to the house with me. I huddled under her cape and put my arm about her waist to feel myself closer to her. She no longer said that we must not see each other again; on the contrary, she was sad at the thought that in a few moments we would have to part. She made me swear a thousand foolish things.

When we reached my father's house, I did not want to let Marthe go off alone, so I walked home with her. This childish game might have continued indefinitely, for she wanted to walk back with me again. I consented, on condition that she walk but half the way.

I got home a half hour late for dinner. It was the first time. I said the train had been late. My father appeared to accept this as the truth.

My heart was now light, and I trod the street as airly as in a dream.

Hitherto, everything I had coveted as a child I had had to resign myself to doing without. And on the other hand, gratitude spoiled for me any toys I was given. How glamorous to a child is the toy he gives himself! I was drunk with passion. Marthe was mine; it was not I who said it, but she herself. I could touch her face, kiss her eyes, her arms; dress her, disfigure her, according to my whim. In my delight, I bit her in places where her skin was bare, so that her mother would suspect she had a lover. I would have liked to mark her with my initials. My childish savageness reverted to the ancient significance of tattooing. Marthe said: "Yes, bite me, scar me! I want everyone to know!"

I wanted to kiss her breasts. But I dared not ask her, thinking she should offer them herself, as she had her lips. After a few days, having grown accustomed to her lips, I could think of no further delights.

We read together in the fire-light. She often tossed into the flames the letters her husband wrote her from the front each day. From his anxiety, it was evident Marthe's letters had become less and less affectionate and more and more rare. It was not without some discomfort that I watched his letters burn. They caused the fire to flare up brighter for a moment, and if the truth be told, I was afraid to see things in a clearer light.

Marthe often asked me now if it were true that I had loved her from our first meeting, and reproached me for not having told her before her marriage. She would not have married, she said, had she known; for although she had felt a sort of love for Jacques at the beginning of their engagement, the long delay (owing to the war) had gradually effaced that love from her heart. She was no longer in love with Jacques when she married him. She had only hoped that his fortnight's leave would bring about some change in her feelings.

But he was not skillful with her. And the one who loves invariably irritates the one who does not love. Jacques loved her increasingly. His letters were those of a man who suffered, but who held his Marthe in too high esteem to think her capable of betrayal. Therefore, he blamed himself alone, and implored her to tell him what wrong he could possibly have done her. "I feel myself so coarse when I am with you, and fear that every word I speak wounds you." Marthe answered him merely that he was mistaken, and that she had no reproaches to make.

It was then the beginning of March. The spring came early that year. On days she did not accompany me to Paris, Marthe awaited my return from the drawing-class lying before the fireplace, naked under her peignoir, with the olive wood her husband's family had sent her blazing in the grate. She had asked them to renew the supply. I cannot say what timidity restrained me, unless it were the reticence one feels when confronted with something one has never done before. I thought of Daphnis. In this case, it was Chloe who had taken a few lessons, and Daphnis dared not ask her to impart her knowledge to him. In fact, I considered Marthe like a virgin delivered, in the first fortnight of her marriage, to a stranger who had taken her several times by force.

At night, alone in my bed, I called aloud for Marthe, despising myself, I who thought myself a man, for not being man enough to make her my mistress. Each day as I went to her house, I promised myself I would not come out of it again before making her mine.

On my sixteenth birthday, in the month of March, 1918, imploring me not to be angry, Marthe made me a present of a dressing-gown, resembling her own, which she wanted me to wear when with her. In my delight, I almost made a pun,—I who disdained making them. My praetexta! For it seemed to me that until now all that had trammeled my desires was the fear of ridicule, of feeling myself dressed while she was not. At first I thought of putting on this "robe" that very day. Then I blushed, understanding the reproaches this gift implied.

In the first days of our love, Marthe had given me a key to her apartment so that I would not have to wait in the garden if she happened to be in town. I might have made less innocent use of this key.

It was a Saturday. I left Marthe, promising to come the next day and have lunch with her. But I had made up my mind to return again that night as soon as I could get away.

At dinner I told my parents that the following day I was going to take a long walk with René through the Sénart forest. I would have to leave at five in the morning. As the whole house would still be asleep, no one would know at what time I had gone, or even if I had slept out. No sooner had I told my mother my plans than she wanted to pack a basket with provisions for the walk. I was dismayed, for this basket would destroy the romance and sublimity of my act. I, who had been relishing the thought of Marthe's terror when I entered her room, now pictured her laughter when she saw her Prince Charming arrive with a market basket on his arm. Try as I might to persuade my mother that René had seen to everything, it was all to no avail. To protest too much would have only aroused suspicion.

But a thing that seems a misfortune to one may mean happiness to another. While my mother packed the basket which promised to spoil my first night of love, I saw my brothers' eyes filled with longing. It occurred to me to give them the basket on the sly, but I knew that once they had emptied it, even the fear of a thrashing would not prevent them from telling everything merely for the glee of getting me into trouble.

I had therefore to resign myself to the inevitable, for no hiding-place seemed to me sufficiently secure.

I had sworn not to leave before midnight, so as to be sure that my parents were asleep. I tried to read. But when ten o'clock struck in the Town Hall, and my parents had been already some time in bed, I could wait no longer. Their room was on the first floor, mine downstairs. I did not put on my shoes, so as to be able to scale the wall as silently as possible. Carrying my shoes in one hand, and in the other the basket, fragile as it was because of the bottles, I carefully opened the pantry door. It was raining. So much the better! The rain would cover any noise. Seeing that the light still burned in my parents' room, I was on the point of going back to bed. But I was already on my way!

Because of the rain I could not go without shoes, so I stopped and put them on again. Then I must scale the wall so as not to set the bell on the gate ringing. I had taken care after dinner to place a garden chair against the wall so as to facilitate my escape. This wall was roofed with tiles, and the rain had made them as slippery as glass. As I clung to them, one came loose and crashed to the ground. The noise of its fall was increased tenfold by my terror. Next I must leap into the street. I held the basket in my teeth, and jumped square into a puddle! For a long minute I stood there, my eyes raised to the lighted window of my parents' bedroom, watching to see if they gave any sign of life. But no one appeared in the window. I was safe!

I followed the Marne to Marthe's house, thinking to hide my basket in the bushes and fetch it next day. The war made this dangerous. In fact, the only place where there were bushes in which I might have concealed the basket was occupied by a sentinel guarding the bridge from J——. I hesitated a long time, paler than a man setting a dynamite fuse. But I finally hid the provisions.

Marthe's gate was closed. I removed the key from its usual place in the letter box, crossed the little garden on tip-toe, and mounted the porch steps. I again took off my shoes before starting up the flight of stairs.

Marthe was so nervous! She might faint at the sight of me in her bedroom! I shook so that I was unable to find the keyhole. Then at last I turned the key slowly, so as to arouse no one. In the hall I ran into the umbrella-stand. I was afraid of mistaking bell-buttons for light switches. I groped my way to the bedroom. There I stopped, again wishing to run away. Perhaps Marthe would never forgive me. Or what if I suddenly discovered that she was deceiving me, and I found her with a man!

I opened the door. I whispered:

"Marthe?"

She answered:

"Instead of giving me such a fright, you might easily have waited to come to-morrow morning. So you have your leave a week sooner?"

She thought it was Jacques!

Thus, if I learned in what manner she would welcome him home, by the same token I also learned that she had been hiding something from me. Jacques was to return in a week's time!

I lit the light. She remained turned towards the wall. It would have been simple to say: "It's I!" And yet I did not say it. I kissed her in the neck.

"Your face is all wet. Go dry yourself."

Then she turned around and cried out.

In the space of one second her whole attitude altered, and without stopping to wonder about my nocturnal presence, she cried:

"My poor darling! You'll catch cold! Get undressed, quick!"

She ran to stir the fire in the parlor. When she came back into the bedroom, she saw that I had not moved, and she said:

"Shall I help you?"

Above all else I had dreaded the moment when I must lay off my clothes and face ridicule, and I blessed the rain which gave a maternal sense to this undressing. But Marthe went off again, came back, and again went out to see if the water for my grog was hot. At last she found me naked upon the bed, half-hidden beneath the eiderdown. She scolded me: it was madness to stay naked; I must rub myself with *eau-de-cologne.*

Then Marthe opened the wardrobe and tossed me some night apparel. "It would probably fit me," she said. It was Jacques'! And I thought how more than possible it was that this soldier might suddenly return, for even Marthe had thought I was he.

I was in bed. Marthe joined me. I asked her to put out the light. For, even in her arms, I mistrusted my timidity. Darkness would give me courage. But Marthe answered me gently:

"No. I want to see you go to sleep."

At these words, gracious though they were, I felt some embarrassment. I saw in them the touching gentleness of this woman who risked all to become my mistress, and who, never guessing my morbid timidity, permitted me to sleep there by her side. For four months I had told her that I loved her, and yet had never given her that proof which men give so lavishly and which often serves for them instead of love.

As before in the garden, I was again seized with misgivings. But, like the pause before the door, this hesitation before love could not be very long. Moreover, the voluptuous ecstasies my imagination promised me had now surpassed all conception. For the first time as well, I dreaded to be like Marthe's husband and leave her a poor memory of our first moments of love.

Her pleasure was thus greater than mine. But in the moment we released each other, her glorious eyes fully repaid me for my discomfort.

Her countenance was transfigured. I was even astonished that I could not touch the halo which shone about her face as in religious paintings.

Relieved of my first fears, others crowded upon me.

I understood at last the power of the acts which had been impeded until then by my timidity, and I trembled at the knowledge that Marthe belonged more to her husband than she had cared to admit.

Impossible as it is for me to enjoy what I taste for the first time, it was in the days to come that I learned better and better the delights of love.

But in the meantime, this false pleasure caused me a true and adult anguish: jealousy!

I resented Marthe's grateful face, for it made me understand the full significance of fleshly bonds. I cursed the man who had before me aroused her body. I thought of my stupidity in having considered Marthe a virgin. At any other time, to have wished for her husband's death would have been but a childish dream, but now that wish became almost as criminal as if I myself had killed him. To the war I owed my budding happiness; from it I expected the apotheosis. I hoped that it would serve my hatred as a nameless person committing a crime in my stead.

Now we wept together; shedding tears of joy. Marthe reproached me for not having prevented her marriage. But would I then have been in this bed of my own choosing? She would have been living with her parents; we would have been unable to see each other. She would never have belonged to Jacques, but neither would she have belonged to me. Had it not been for him, she could not have compared, and she might have regretted this act, hoping for something better to come. I had no hate for Jacques. But I hated the conviction that we owed everything to this man we were deceiving. I loved Marthe too much to consider our happiness a crime.

We wept together because we were only children, possessing no ways nor means. Take Marthe away! As she now belonged to me alone, that would mean taking her away from myself, for they would surely separate us. We already saw with dread the end of the war, for it would mean the end of our love. We knew this, although Marthe swore to me that she would leave everything, that she would follow me. I tried to put myself in Marthe's place, and, my nature not being a rebellious one, I could not imagine such a piece of folly. Marthe explained to me why she considered herself too old. In fifteen years' time, life would be just beginning for me: women would love me, women as young as she was now. "I would have only suffering in store for me," she added. "If you left me, it would kill me. If you stayed with me, it would be through weakness, and I would suffer to see you sacrificing your happiness."

Despite my indignation, I was annoyed with myself for not appearing more convinced of the contrary. But Marthe asked nothing better than to be persuaded, and my worst arguments seemed to satisfy her. She replied:

"Yes, I hadn't thought of that. I feel that you're not lying to me."

But faced with Marthe's fears, I felt my own self-confidence shaken. Therefore my consolations lacked fervor. I seemed not to disillusion her only through politeness. I said: "No, no, you're mad!" Alas, I was far too responsive to youth not to realize that I might drift away from Marthe when the day came that her youth faded and mine came into flower.

Although my love seemed to me to have acquired its complete and definite form, it was in reality in its most primitive stage. The least obstacle made it falter.

So the frenzies of our minds that night exhausted us more than did the frenzies of our flesh. The one seemed to offer us relief from the other, but the truth was that this conflict was the finishing touch. The cocks, growing more and more numerous, crowed throughout the night. And I perceived that poetical falsehood that cocks crow at the rising of the sun. This was not extraordinary. For at my age, insomnia is usually a stranger. But Marthe observed it too, and with such surprise that it must have been for the first time. She could not have understood the intensity with which I pressed her to me, for her surprise proved to me that she had not yet passed a sleepless night with Jacques.

My raptures convinced me that our love was an exceptional love. Thinking ourselves the first to experience ecstasies such as these, we forget that love is like poetry, and that all lovers, even the most commonplace, imagine they are doing something new. I said to Marthe (and without believing it, moreover, but to make her think that I shared in her anxieties): "You will leave me. Other men will appeal to you," and she insisted that she was certain of her love. Little by little, I persuaded myself that I would remain with her even when she was no longer so young, in my inertia making our eternal happiness dependent on her energy.

Sleep had surprised us as we lay naked. On awakening and seeing her uncovered, I was afraid she might be cold. I touched her body. It was burning. To see her sleeping brought me to a pitch of incomparable voluptuousness. In ten minutes, this voluptuousness seemed more than I could bear. I kissed Marthe on the shoulder. She did not awake. A second kiss, less chaste, acted with the violence of an alarm-clock. She started up, rubbing her eyes, and covered me with kisses, like someone finding a loved one there in bed after having dreamed that he had died. But she, on the contrary, thought she had dreamed the truth, and then found me upon awakening.

It was already eleven o'clock. We were drinking our chocolate when we heard the bell ring. I thought of Jacques. "Let's hope he's armed." Although so afraid of death, I did not quail. On the contrary, I would have accepted Jacques' arrival, on condition that he kill us both. Any other solution seemed ridiculous to me.

To face death calmly has value only if one faces it alone. Death together is no longer death, even to unbelievers. Sorrow lies, not in leaving life, but in leaving that which gives it a meaning. And if love be our life, where lies the difference between living together or dying together?

I had no time to consider myself a hero, for in thinking that Jacques might kill only Marthe or only me, I plumbed the depths of my own egoism. I did not know which of these two calamities would be the worse!

As Marthe did not move, I thought I had made a mistake and that someone had rung at the landlord's door. But the bell sounded again.

"Keep quiet! Don't move!" whispered Marthe. "That must be my mother. I completely forgot that she was going to stop by after mass."

I was happy to witness one of her sacrifices. If ever a mistress or a friend is late for an appointment, I immediately see them as dead. So I attributed this form of anguish to Marthe's mother, and gloated in her alarm, and in the thought that I was to blame for all she suffered. . . .

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There is nothing more engrossing than love. Merely because we idle when in love is no proof that we are idle. Love somehow senses that its one true derivative is work, and thus work becomes a rival. And love brooks no rival. But love is a beneficent idleness, like the gentle rain from heaven that fecundates the soil.

If youth be fatuous, it is because it has been passed in idleness. Our educational systems are unsound because intended for the mediocre, that is for the greater number. For the progressive mind, idleness does not exist. Never did I learn more than during those long days which would have seemed empty to the casual witness, days when I kept watch upon my inexperienced heart as a parvenu upon his manners at a dinner table.

When I did not sleep at Marthe's, or in other words, almost every day, we went out after dinner and strolled along the Marne until eleven o'clock. Sometimes I unfastened my father's boat. Marthe took the oars, while I lay down and rested my head in her lap. I was in her way. A sudden blow of the oar would strike me, reminding me that this dalliance could not last forever.

By the nature of things, love seeks to share its beatitude with another. Because of this even an undemonstrative mistress will become amorous, embrace her lover in the neck, and invent a thousand small ways of harassing him if he is busy writing a letter. I never wanted to kiss Marthe so much as when some occupation took her attention from me; never did I desire more to fondle and undo her hair than when she was doing it up to go out. In the boat, I threw myself upon her and covered her with kisses so that she would let go the oars and the boat would drift into the grasses and the white and yellow water-lilies near the bank. In this she read the signs of an uncontrollable passion, whereas my chief incentive was an irresistible need to disturb her. Then we would moor the boat behind the tall clumps of grasses. The fear of being seen or of upsetting the boat increased a thousandfold the voluptuousness of our caresses.

Hence I no longer resented the landlord's hostility which made it so difficult for me to put in an appearance at Marthe's house.

My mania to possess her in a way that Jacques had not been able to, to kiss some corner of her skin once she had sworn to me that no other lips but mine had ever touched it, was nothing but sheer wantonness. But did I admit this to myself? All love has its time of youth, of maturity, and of old age. Had mine already reached that final stage when it required certain intricacies to satisfy it? For if my voluptuousness derived its strength from habit, it was refreshed by those thousand nothings, those slight rectifications in the daily fare. Thus in the beginning the drug fiend obtains his ecstasy not through increasing the dose, which would soon prove fatal, but by conforming to a rhythm which he himself invents, either in the change of hour, or by employing other tricks to foil his organism.

I loved the left bank of the Marne so well that I spent much time on the right bank, so different in every way, so that I might contemplate the side I loved. The right bank is less gentle, and given over to market gardeners and farmers, whereas my side belongs to loafers. We would tie the boat fast to a tree and lie down in the heart of the wheat. Stirred by the evening breeze, the wheat field quivered about us. Our egoism forgot its prejudices in this hiding-place and, as we had sacrificed Jacques, so we sacrificed the wheat to the comfort of our love.

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[MARTHE'S FRIEND]

The next day, she came to Marthe's at four o'clock. I told her Marthe was in Paris but would soon be back. I added: "She told me I was on no account to let you go before she got back." I thought I would confess my ruse to her only after it was too late.

Fortunately, she was greedy. My own greediness acquired a new form. I had no appetite for the tart, or the raspberry ice, but I longed to be the tart and the ice when she lifted them to her mouth. I made involuntary grimaces with my mouth as I watched her eat.

It was not through viciousness that I craved Svéa, but through greediness. Failing her lips, her cheeks would have sufficed me.

I talked to her, pronouncing each syllable distinctly so that she would understand. This little game excited me so that I, usually so silent, now grew impatient because I could not speak more rapidly. I felt a need of babbling, of murmuring childish confidences. I put my ear close to her mouth and drank in her little words.

I had forced her to take a liqueur. Afterwards, I was sorry for her, as though for a bird that one has intoxicated.

I hoped that her tipsiness would serve my ends, however, for little I cared whether or not she gave me her lips of her own free will. The indelicacy of such a scene enacted in Marthe's room occurred to me, but I assured myself that I was detracting nothing from my love for Marthe. I wanted Svéa as though she were a fruit, which was not a thing a mistress could be jealous of.

I took her hands in mine which now seemed so clumsy to me. I would have liked to undress her and rock her in my arms. She lay down on the sofa. I got up and leaned over to where her hair, still childish down, began to grow in her neck. I did not gather from her silence that my kisses gave her any pleasure; but she was incapable of anger, and could think of no polite phrase in French to repulse me. I nibbled her cheeks, expecting sweet juices to run from them as from ripe peaches.

At last I kissed her mouth. She submitted to my embraces, a patient victim, with her mouth and eyes closed. Her one gesture of refusal consisted of feebly moving her head from right to left, from left to right. I may have been wrong, but I thought my mouth felt the pressure of a response. I clung to her as I had never clung to Marthe. This resistance, which was, in reality, no resistance, spurred my audacity and my inertia. I was naïve enough to think that the rest would follow as a matter of course, and that I should have an easy triumph.

I had never undressed a woman; rather, women had undressed me. So I went about it awkwardly, beginning by taking off her shoes and stockings. I kissed her feet and legs. But when I tried to unfasten her blouse, Svéa fought like a little devil who refuses to go to bed and has to be undressed by force. She kicked me unmercifully. I captured her feet in mid air, held them fast, and kissed them. Finally, the point of satiety came, as greediness itself comes to an end after too much candy and cream. I had to tell her of my deceit, and that Marthe was away on a trip. I made her promise, if she should meet Marthe, never to tell her of this episode. I did not admit that I was Marthe's lover, but I implied it was so. A liking for mystery made her answer "To-morrow," when, having had enough of her, I asked her out of politeness if we would one day meet again.

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I did not go back to Marthe's. And perhaps Svéa never went back and rang at the closed door. I was aware how reprehensible my conduct must appear to conventional morality. But doubtless the circumstances alone had made Svéa seem so precious to me. Would I have desired her elsewhere but in Marthe's room?

But I had no remorse. And it was not the thought of Marthe which made me drop the little Swedish girl, but the feeling that I had already drawn all the sugar from her.

Several days later, I received a letter from Marthe. It enclosed one from her landlord, saying that his house was not a bawdy house and that I had made fine use of the key she had left me by bringing a woman to her apartment. Marthe added that she now had proof of my perfidy, and she would never see me again. No doubt she would suffer, but she preferred to suffer than be made a fool of.

I knew such threats were harmless and that a lie, or in case of necessity the truth, would pacify them. But it vexed me that in a letter of such a nature, Marthe made no mention of suicide. I thought she was cold and her letter unworthy of justification. For in her place, had I not actually intended to commit suicide, I would have considered it the correct thing to have threatened it. An indelible stamp of my youth and my schoolboy mentality: I thought certain lies were exacted by the code of passion.

And now, in my apprenticeship to love, I was faced with a new task: I must acquit myself in Marthe's eyes, and accuse her of having less confidence in me than in her landlord. I pointed out to her how easy it had been to concoct this story. The truth of the matter was that Svéa had come to see her one day while I was writing in her room. If I opened the door to her it was only because, having perceived her from the window and knowing that people were trying to keep them apart, I had not wanted her to think that Marthe held her responsible for this unpleasant separation. She had doubtless come secretly, and in the face of countless difficulties.

At the same time, I could assure Marthe that Svéa's affection for her remained unaltered. And I finished by telling Marthe what a comfort it had been for me to be able to talk of her, in her own room, and to her closest friend.

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This scare made me curse the love which forces us to account for our acts, when I would have preferred never to give an accounting, either to myself or to anyone else.

But love, I told myself, must offer great compensations since every man puts his liberty into love's hands. I hoped I would soon be strong enough to dispense with it, and thus never need to sacrifice a single one of my desires. I did not realize that, one serfdom for another, it is better by far to be enslaved by one's heart than to be the slave of one's senses.

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As the plundering bee enriches the hive, so does the lover enrich his love with all the casual lusts of the street. His mistress reaps the benefit. I had not yet fathomed that discipline which endows the faithless with fidelity. If a man covet a girl and transmit this heat to the woman he loves, his desire, all the keener because unsatisfied, will convince this woman that she was never loved so well. If she is deceived, the common conception of morality has not been sinned against. Men capable of deceiving their mistresses at the very height of their love should not be too hastily condemned; nor should they be termed frivolous. Subterfuge is repugnant to them and they would not dream of confusing their happiness with their pleasure.

Marthe waited for me to clear myself. Then she implored me to forgive her her reproaches. This I did, not without some ado. She wrote to the landlord, begging him sarcastically to be kind enough to permit me in her absence to open the door to one of her friends.

NOTE ON

"THE STORY OF MARY MACLANE"

Mary MacLane begins by affirming that at nineteen she must reveal herself to the world, for there has never been a parallel to her galaxy of attributes. She states that her dead father means nothing to her, nor her living mother, sisters, and two brothers. She desires fame, though she is a "genius, a thief, a liar." In her summing-up, she declares that up to this time the devil was real and concrete, but that after she reached nineteen she found so many pseudo-devils who proved merely to be men! They all sought to seduce her, whereas the man who can "really seduce the simplest maid—regarding seduction, which it is, as a high art—is rare as the night-blooming flower of the moon."

MARY MACLANE

The Story of Mary MacLane

Born in Canada, Mary MacLane (1881-1929) moved to the United States as a youngster. In the booming copper city of Butte, the worldly, passionate child drank deep of the classics of femininity, notably the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff,* a Russian noble, who died at twenty-four and whose journal revealed most of the thoughts, secret desires, and vanity of a highly talented, fluctuating young woman. Mary MacLane was fired with ambition to surpass her model, to rival St. Teresa in intensity, and to plumb all depths, scale all heights, and conceal nothing. Her diabolical worship, absolute egoism, and disdain for the social vestures of modesty burned through her pages. The first edition of *The Book of Mary MacLane,* printed when she was twenty-one (1902, definitive edition 1911), came to the attention of G. Stanley Hall, then the greatest authority on adolescence. He celebrated it as the guide to the undescribed world of girls. Mary MacLane found herself famous. Later she emigrated to the Atlantic states, became a literary lion, wrote a sequel, *I, Mary MacLane,* and turned to journalism, before she died at forty-eight—twice the age of her Russian model.

January 24.

I AM charmingly original. I am delightfully refreshing. I am startlingly Bohemian. I am quaintly interesting—the while in my sleeve I may be smiling and smiling—and a villain. I can talk to a roomful of dull people and compel their interest, admiration, and astonishment. I do this sometimes for my own amusement. As I have said, I am a rather plain-featured, insignificant-looking genius, but I have a graceful personality. I have a pretty figure. I am well set up. And when I choose to talk in my charmingly original fashion, embellishing my conversation with many quaint lies, I have a certain very noticeable way with me, an "air."

It is well, if one has nothing else, to acquire an air. And an air taken in conjunction with my charming originality, my delightfully refreshing candor, is something powerful and striking in its way.

I do not, however, exert myself often in this way; partly because I can sometimes foresee, from the character of the assembled company, that my performance will not have the desired effect—for I am a genius, and genius at close range at times carries itself unconsciously to the point where it becomes so interesting that it is atrocious, and can not be carried farther without having somewhat mildly disastrous results; and then, again, the facial antics of some ten or a dozen persons possessed more or less of the qualities of the genus fool—even they become tiresome after a while.

Always I talk about myself on an occasion of this kind. Indeed, my conversation is on all occasions devoted directly or indirectly to myself.

When I talk on the subject of ethics, I talk of it as it is related to Mary MacLane.

When I give out broad-minded opinions about Ninon de l'Enclos, I demonstrate her relative position to Mary MacLane!

When I discourse liberally on the subject of the married relation, I talk of it only as it will affect Mary MacLane.

An interesting creature, Mary MacLane.

As a matter of fact, it is so with every one, only every one is far from realizing and acknowledging it. And I have not lacked listeners, though these people do not appreciate me. They do not realize that I am a genius.

I am of womankind and of nineteen years. I am able to stand off and gaze critically and dispassionately at myself and my relation to my environment, to the world, to everything the world contains. I am able to judge whether I am good and whether I am bad. I am able, indeed, to tell what I am and where I stand. I can see far, far inward. I am a genius.

Charlotte Brontë did this in some degree, and she was a genius; and also Marie Bashkirtseff, and Olive Schreiner, and George Eliot. They are all geniuses.

And so, then, I am a genius—a genius in my own right.

I am fundamentally, organically egotistic. My vanity and self-conceit have attained truly remarkable development as I've walked and walked in the loneliness of the sand and barrenness. Not the least remarkable part of it is that I know my egotism and vanity thoroughly—thoroughly, and plume myself thereon.

These are the ear-marks of a genius—and of a fool. There is a finely-drawn line between a genius and a fool. Often this line is overstepped and your fool becomes a genius, or your genius becomes a fool.

It is but a tiny step.

There's but a tiny step between the great and the little, the tender and the contemptuous, the sublime and the ridiculous, the aggressive and the humble, the paradise and the perdition.

And so is it between the genius and the fool.

I am a genius.

I am not prepared to say how many times I may overstep the finely-drawn line, or how many times I have already overstepped it. 'Tis a matter of small moment.

I have entered into certain things marvelously deep. I know things, I know that I know them, and I know that I know that I know them, which is a fine psychological point.

It is magnificent of me to have gotten so far, at the age of nineteen, with no training other than that of the sand and barrenness. Magnificent—do you hear?

Very often I take this fact in my hand and squeeze it hard like an orange, to get the sweet, sweet juice from it. I squeeze a great deal of juice from it every day, and every day the juice is renewed, like the vitals of Prometheus. And so I squeeze and squeeze, and drink the juice, and try to be satisfied.

Yes, you may gaze long and curiously at the portrait in the front of this book. It is of one who is a genius of egotism and analysis, a genius who is awaiting the Devil's coming,—a genius, with a wondrous liver within.

I shall tell you more about this liver, I think, before I have done. . . .

April 3.

This evening in the slow-deepening dusk I sat by my window and spent an hour in passionate conversation with the Devil. I fancied I sat, with my hands folded and my feet crossed, on an ugly but comfortable red velvet sofa in some nondescript room.

And the fascinating man-devil was seated near in a frail willow chair.

He had willingly come to pass the time of day with me. He was in a good-humored mood, and I amused and interested him. And for myself, I was extremely glad to see the Devil sitting there and felt vividly as always. But I sat quietly enough.

The fascinating man-devil has fascinating steel-gray eyes, and they looked at me with every variety of glance—from quizzical to tender.

It were easy—oh, how easy—to follow those eyes to the earth's ends.

The Devil leaned back in the frail willow chair and looked at me.

"And now that I am here, Mary MacLane," he said, "what would you?"

"I want you to marry me," I replied at once. "And I want it more than ever anything was wanted since the world began."

"So? I am flattered," said the Devil, and smiled gently, enchantingly.

At that smile I was ravished and transported, and a spasm of some rare emotion thrilled all the little nerves in me from my heels to my forehead. And yet the smile was not for me but rather somewhat at my expense.

"But," he went on, "you must know it is not my custom to marry women."

"I am sure it is not," I agreed, "and I do not ask to be peculiarly favored. Anything that you may give me, however little, will constitute marriage for me."

"And would marriage itself be so small a thing?" asked the Devil.

"Marriage," I said, "would be a great, oh, a wonderful thing, and the most beautiful of all. I want what is good according to my lights, and because I am a genius my lights are many and far-reaching."

"What do your lights tell you?" the man-devil inquired.

"They tell me this: that nothing in the world matters unless love is with it, and if love is with it and it seems to the virtuous a barren and infamous thing, still—because of the love—it partakes of the very highest."

"And have you the courage of your convictions?" he said.

"If you offered me," I replied, "that which to the blindly virtuous seems the worst possible thing, it would yet be for me the red, red line on the sky, my heart's desire, my life, my rest. You are the Devil. I have fallen in love with you."

"I believe you have," said the Devil. "And how does it feel to be in love?"

Sitting composedly on the ugly red velvet sofa, with my hands folded and my feet crossed, I attempted to define that wonderful feeling.

"It feels," I said, "as if sparks of fire and ice crystals ran riot in my veins with my blood; as if a thousand pin-points pierced my flesh, and every other point a point of pleasure, and every other point a point of pain; as if my heart were laid to rest in a bed of velvet and cotton-wool but kept awake by sweet violin arias; as if milk and honey and the blossoms of the cherry flowed into my stomach and then vanished utterly; as if strange, beautiful worlds lay spread out before my eyes, alternately in dazzling light and complete darkness with chaotic rapidity; as if orris-root were sprinkled in the folds of my brain; as if sprigs of dripping-wet sweet-fern were stuck inside my hot linen collar; as if—well, you know," I ended suddenly.

"Very good," said the Devil. "You are in love. And you say you are in love with me."

"Oh, with you!" I exclaimed with suppressed violence. The effort to suppress this violence cost me pounds of nerve-power. But I kept my hands still quietly folded and my feet crossed, and it was a triumph of self-control. "I want you to marry me," I added despairingly.

"And you think," he inquired, "that apart from the opinion of the wise world, it would be a suitable marriage?"

"A suitable marriage!" I exclaimed. "I hate a suitable marriage! No, it would not be suitable. It would be Bohemian, outlandish, adorable!"

The Devil smiled.

This time the smile was for me. And, oh, the long, old, overpowering enchantment of the smile of steel-gray eyes!—the steel-gray eyes of the Devil!

It is one of those things that one remembers.

"You are a beautifully frank, little feminine creature," he said. "Frankness is in these days a lost art."

"Yes, I am beautifully frank," I replied. "Out of countless millions of the Devil's anointed I am one to acknowledge myself."

"But withal you are not true," said the man-devil.

"I am a liar," I answered.

"You are a liar, surely," he said, "but you stay with your lies. To stay with anything is Truth."

"It is so," I replied. "Nevertheless I am false as woman can be."

"But you know what you want."

"Oh, yes," I said, "I know what I want. I want you to marry me."

"And why?"

"Because I love you."

"That seems an excellent reason, certainly," said the Devil.

"I want to be happy for once in my life," I said. "I have never been happy. And if I could be happy once for one gold day, I should be satisfied, and I should have that to remember in the long years."

"And you are a strangely pathetic little animal," said the Devil.

"I am pathetic," I said. I clasped my hands very tightly. "I know that I am pathetic: and for this reason I am the most terribly pathetic of all in the world."

"Poor little Mary MacLane!" said the Devil. He leaned toward me. He looked at me with those strange, wonderfully tender, divine steel-gray eyes. "Poor little Mary MacLane!" he said again in a voice that was like the Gray Dawn. And the eyes—the glance of the steel-gray eyes entered into me and thrilled me through and through. It frightened and soothed me. It racked and comforted me. It ravished me with inconceivable gentleness so that I bent my head down and sobbed as I breathed.

"Don't you know, you little thing," said the man-devil, softly-compassionate, "your life will be very hard for you always—harder when you are happy than when you go in Nothingness?"

"I know—I know. Nevertheless I want to be happy," I sobbed. I felt a rush of an old thick, heavy anguish. "It is day after day. It is week after week. It is month after month. It is year after year. It is only time going and going. There is no joy. There is no lightness of heart. It is only the passing of days. I am young and all alone. Always I have been alone: when I was five and lay in the damp grass and tortured myself to keep back tears; and through the long, cold, lonely years till now—and now all the torture does not keep back the tears. There is no one—nothing—to help me bear it. It is more than pathetic when one is nineteen in all young, new feeling and sees Nothing anywhere—except long, dark, lonely years behind her and before her. No one that loves me and long, long years."

I stopped. The gray eyes were fixed on me. Oh, they were the steel-gray eyes!—and they had a look in them. The long, bitter pageant of my Nothingness mingled with this look and the coming together of these was like the joining of two halves.

I do not know which brings me the deeper pain—the loneliness and weariness of my sand and barrenness, or the look in the steel-gray eyes. But as always I would gladly leave all and follow the eyes to the world's end. They are like the sun's setting. And they are like the pale, beautiful stars. And they are like the shadows of earth and sky that come together in the dark.

"Why," asked the Devil, "are you in love with me?"

"You know so much—so much," I answered. "I think it must be that. The wisdom of the spheres is in your brain. And so, then, you must understand me. Because no one understands all these smouldering feelings my greatest agony is. You must need know the very finest of them. And your eyes! Oh, it's no matter why I'm in love with you. It's enough that I am. And if you married me I would make you happier than you are."

"I am not happy at all," said the man-devil. "I am merely contented."

"Contentment," I said, "in place of Happiness, is a horrid feeling. Not one of your countless advocates loves you. They all serve you faithfully and well, but with it all they hate you. Always people hate their tyrant. You are my tyrant, but I love you absorbingly, madly. Happiness for me would be to live with you and see you made happy by the overwhelming flood of my love."

"It interests me," he said. "You are a most interesting feminine philosopher—and your philosophy is after my own heart, in its lack of *virtue*. It is to be hoped you are not 'intellectual,' which is an unpardonable trait."

"Indeed, I am not," I replied. "Intellectual people are detestable. They have pale faces and bad stomachs and bad livers, and if they are women their corsets are sure to be too tight, and probably black, and if they are men they are *soft,* which is worse. And they never by any chance know what it means to walk all day in the rain, or to roll around on the ground in the dirt. And, above all, they never fall in love with the Devil."

"They are tiresome," the Devil agreed. "If I were to marry you how long would you be happy?"

"For three days."

"You are wise," he said. "You are wonderfully wise in some things, though you are still very young."

"I am wise," I answered. "Being of womankind and nineteen years, I am more than ready to give up absolutely everything that is good in the world's sight, though they are contemptible things enough in my own, for love. All for love. Therefore I am wise. Also I am a fool."

"Why are you a fool?"

"Because I am a genius."

"Your logic is good logic," said the Devil.

"My logic—oh, I don't care anything about logic," I said with sudden complete weariness. I felt buried and wrapped round and round in weariness. Everything lost its color. Everything turned cold.

"At this moment," said the Devil, "you feel as if you cared for nothing at all. But if I chose I could bring about a transfiguration. I could kiss your soul into Paradise."

I answered, "Yes," without emotion.

"An hour," said the Devil, "is not very long. But we know it is long enough to suffer in, and go mad in, and live in, and be happy in. And the world contains a great many hours. Now I am leaving you. It is likely that I may never come again, and it is likely that I may come again."

It all vanished. I still sat by my window in the gloom. "It is dreary," I said.

But yes. The world contains a great many hours.

NOTE ON H. DE VERE STACPOOLE'S

"THE BLUE LAGOON"

Arthur Lestrange, a wealthy Bostonian, undertakes a sea voyage for his health. Traveling with him are his son, Dick, nearly nine, and his niece, Emmeline, a year younger. The ship goes down in an explosion on the Pacific Ocean. The lifeboats become separated: Lestrange is picked up by a French whaler; Paddy, an Irish sailor, and the two children land on a coral island.

Paddy teaches them how to live: what to eat, what to avoid, what to do. Before long, they find him lying dead on the strand.

Years pass. The growing children live among bird-friends, search the island, spear fish, and carry on the existence that comes from observing their animal and bird companions. They watch Koko, the bird, who has taken a mate and built a nest.

Our selection begins when the two children have reached puberty, and when nature drives them on as it does Koko.

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

The Blue Lagoon

Born in 1863 in Dublin, H. de Vere Stacpoole became a physician, participated in deep-sea expeditions, approached literature via the German metaphysicians, then altered his literary style as a result of his immersion in French fiction. He has written more than 70 volumes of fiction, essays, criticism, drama, poetry, and translations from many tongues; and though the merit of this versatile product is warmly disputed, it is doubtful that Stacpoole is disturbed. In *The Blue Lagoon* (1910) he utilized his medical enthusiams and his Pacific expeditions to concoct a fable about two children. Survivors of a shipwreck, Dick and Emmeline are cast upon an atoll; and years after, when they have reached puberty, they find themselves alone on the island. This boy and girl, who have been brought up as brother and sister (which they are not), find love as naturally as bird or beast. Despite Stacpoole's scientific knowledge, he creates a set of assumptions that should not be too closely examined. It is a fairy tale of uninstructed love at fourteen: woe to the critical mind which would deface its tropical beauties with too many literal questions.

THEY entered the wood and passed a little well, a well without apparent source or outlet and a bottom of fine white sand. How the sand had formed there, it would be impossible to say; but there it was, and around the margin grew ferns redoubling themselves on the surface of the crystal-clear water. They left this to the right and struck into the heart of the wood. The heat of midday still lurked here; the way was clear, for there was a sort of path between the trees, as if, in very ancient days, there had been a road.

Right across this path, half lost in shadow, half sunlit, the lianas hung their ropes. The hotoo tree, with its powdering of delicate blossoms, here stood, showing its lost loveliness to the sun; in the shade the scarlet hibiscus burned like a flame. Artu and breadfruit trees and cocoa-nut bordered the way.

As they proceeded the trees grew denser and the path more obscure.

All at once, rounding a sharp turn, the path ended in a valley carpeted with fern. This was the place that always filled Emmeline with an undefined dread. One side of it was all built up in terraces with huge blocks of stone. Blocks of stone so enormous, that the wonder was how the ancient builders had put them in their places.

Trees grew along the terraces, thrusting their roots between the interstices of the blocks. At their base, slightly tilted forward as if with the sinkage of years, stood a great stone figure roughly carved, thirty feet high at least—mysterious-looking, the very spirit of the place. This figure and the terraces, the valley itself, and the very trees that grew there, inspired Emmeline with deep curiosity and vague fear.

People had been here once; sometimes she could fancy she saw dark shadows moving amidst the trees, and the whisper of the foliage seemed to her to hide voices at times, even as its shadow concealed forms. It was indeed an uncanny place to be alone in even under the broad light of day. All across the Pacific for thousands of miles you find relics of the past, like these scattered through the islands.

These temple places are nearly all the same: great terraces of stone, massive idols, desolation overgrown with foliage. They hint at one religion, and a time when the sea space of the Pacific was a continent, which, sinking slowly through the ages, has left only its higher lands and hill-tops visible in the form of islands. Round these places the woods are thicker than elsewhere, hinting at the presence there, once, of sacred groves. The idols are immense, their faces are vague; the storms and the suns and the rains of the ages have cast over them a veil. The sphinx is understandable and a toy compared to these things, some of which have a stature of fifty feet, whose creation is veiled in absolute mystery—the gods of a people for ever and for ever lost.

The "stone man" was the name Emmeline had given the idol of the valley; and sometimes at nights, when her thoughts would stray that way, she would picture him standing all alone in the moonlight or starlight staring straight before him.

He seemed forever listening; unconsciously one fell to listening too, and then the valley seemed steeped in a supernatural silence. He was not good to be alone with.

Emmeline sat down amidst her fears, just at his base. When one was close up to him he lost the suggestion of life, and was simply a great stone which cast a shadow in the sun.

Dick threw himself down also to rest. Then he rose up and went off amidst the guava bushes, plucking the fruit and filling his basket. Since he had seen the schooner, the white men on her decks, her great masts and sails, and general appearance of freedom and speed and unknown adventure, he had been more than ordinarily glum and restless. Perhaps he connected her in his mind with the far-away vision of the *Northumberland,* and the idea of other places and lands, and the yearning for change the idea of them inspired.

He came back with his basket full of the ripe fruit, gave some to the girl and sat down beside her. When she had finished eating them she took the cane that he used for carrying the basket and held it in her hands. She was bending it in the form of a bow when it slipped, flew out and struck her companion a sharp blow on the side of his face.

Almost on the instant he turned and slapped her on the shoulder. She stared at him for a moment in troubled amazement, a sob came in her throat. Then some veil seemed lifted, some wizard's wand stretched out, some mysterious vial broken. As she looked at him like that, he suddenly and fiercely clasped her in his arms. He held her like this for a moment, dazed, stupefied, not knowing what to do with her. Then her lips told him, for they met his in an endless kiss.

* * * * * * *

The moon rose up that evening and shot her silver arrows at the house under the artu tree. The house was empty. Then the moon came across the sea and across the reef.

She lit the lagoon to its dark, dim heart. She lit the coral brains and sand spaces, and the fish, casting their shadows on the sand and the coral. The keeper of the lagoon rose to greet her, and the fin of him broke her reflection on the mirror-like surface into a thousand glittering ripples. She saw the white staring ribs of the form on the reef. Then, peeping over the trees, she looked down into the valley, where the great idol of stone had kept its solitary vigil for five thousand years, perhaps, or more.

At his base, in his shadow, looking as if under his protection, lay two human beings, naked, clasped in each other's arms, and fast asleep. One could scarcely pity his vigil, had it been marked sometimes through the years by such an incident as this. The thing had been conducted just as the birds conduct their love affairs. An affair absolutely natural, absolutely blameless, and without sin.

It was a marriage according to Nature, without feast or guests, consummated with accidental cynicism under the shadow of a religion a thousand years dead.

So happy in their ignorance were they, that they only knew that suddenly life had changed, that the skies and the sea were bluer, and that they had become in some magical way one a part of the other. The birds on the tree above were equally as happy in their ignorance, and in their love.

* * * * * * *

One day Dick climbed on to the tree above the house, and, driving Madame Koko off the nest upon which she was sitting, peeped in. There were several pale green eggs in it. He did not disturb them, but climbed down again, and the bird resumed her seat as if nothing had happened. Such an occurrence would have terrified a bird used to the ways of men, but here the birds were so fearless and so full of confidence that often they would follow Emmeline in the wood, flying from branch to branch, peering at her through the leaves, lighting quite close to her—once, even, on her shoulder.

The days passed. Dick had lost his restlessness: his wish to wander had vanished. He had no reason to wander; perhaps that was the reason why. In all the broad earth he could not have found anything more desirable than what he had.

Instead now of finding a half-naked savage followed dog-like by his mate, you would have found of an evening a pair of lovers wandering on the reef. They had in a pathetic sort of way attempted to adorn the house with a blue flowering creeper taken from the wood and trained over the entrance.

Emmeline, up to this, had mostly done the cooking, such as it was; Dick helped her now, always. He talked to her no longer in short sentences flung out as if to a dog; and she, almost losing the strange reserve that had clung to her from childhood, half showed him her mind. It was a curious mind: the mind of a dreamer, almost the mind of a poet. The Cluricaunes dwelt there, and vague shapes born of things she had heard about or dreamt of: she had thoughts about the sea and stars, the flowers and birds.

Dick would listen to her as she talked, as a man might listen to the sound of a rivulet. His practical mind could take no share in the dreams of his other half, but her conversation pleased him.

He would look at her for a long time together, absorbed in thought. He was admiring her.

Her hair, blue-black and glossy, tangled him in its meshes; he would stroke it, so to speak, with his eyes, and then pull her close to him and bury his face in it; the smell of it was intoxicating. He breathed her as one does the perfume of a rose.

Her ears were small, and like little white shells. He would take one between finger and thumb and play with it as if it were a toy, pulling at the lobe of it, or trying to flatten out the curved part. Her breasts, her shoulders, her knees, her little feet, every bit of her, he would examine and play with and kiss. She would lie and let him, seeming absorbed in some far-away thought, of which he was the object, then all at once her arms would go round him. All this used to go on in the broad light of day, under the shadow of the artu leaves, with no one to watch except the bright-eyed birds in the leaves above.

Not all their time would be spent in this fashion. Dick was just as keen after the fish. He dug up with a spade—improvised from one of the boards of the dinghy—a space of soft earth near the taro patch and planted the seeds of melons he found in the wood; he rethatched the house. They were, in short, as busy as they could be in such a climate, but love-making would come on them in fits, and then everything would be forgotten. Just as one revisits some spot to renew the memory of a painful or pleasant experience received there, they would return to the valley of the idol and spend a whole afternoon in its shade. The absolute happiness of wandering through the woods together, discovering new flowers, getting lost, and finding their way again, was a thing beyond expression.

Dick had suddenly stumbled upon Love. His courtship had lasted only some twenty minutes; it was being gone over again now, and extended. . . .

Always before, when he had been away, the first thing to greet his eyes on his return had been the figure of Emmeline. Either at the lagoon edge or the house door he would find her waiting for him.

She was not waiting for him to-night. When he reached the house she was not there, and he paused, after searching the place, a prey to the most horrible perplexity, and unable for the moment to think or act.

Since the shock of the occurrence on the reef she had been subject at times to occasional attacks of headache; and when the pain was more than she could bear, she would go off and hide. Dick would hunt for her amidst the trees, calling out her name and hallooing. A faint "halloo" would answer when she heard him, and then he would find her under a tree or bush, with her unfortunate head between her hands, a picture of misery.

He remembered this now, and started off along the borders of the wood, calling to her, and pausing to listen. No answer came.

He searched amidst the trees as far as the little well, waking the echoes with his voice; then he came back slowly, peering about him in the deep dusk that now was yielding to the starlight. He sat down before the door of the house, and, looking at him, you might have fancied him in the last stages of exhaustion. Profound grief and profound exhaustion act on the frame very much in the same way. He sat with his chin resting on his chest, his hands helpless. He could hear her voice, still as he heard it over at the other side of the island. She had been in danger and called to him, and he had been calmly fishing, unconscious of it all.

This thought maddened him. He sat up, stared around him and beat the ground with the palms of his hands; then he sprang to his feet and made for the dinghy. He rowed to the reef: the action of a madman, for she could not possibly be there.

There was no moon, the starlight both lit and veiled the world, and no sound but the majestic thunder of the waves. As he stood, the night wind blowing on his face, the white foam seething before him, and Canopus burning in the great silence overhead, the fact that he stood in the centre of an awful and profound indifference came to his untutored mind with a pang.

He returned to the shore: the house was still deserted. A little bowl made from the shell of a cocoa-nut stood on the grass near the doorway. He had last seen it in her hands, and he took it up and held it for a moment, pressing it tightly to his breast. Then he threw himself down before the doorway, and lay upon his face, with head resting upon his arms in the attitude of a person who is profoundly asleep.

He must have searched through the woods again that night just as a somnambulist searches, for he found himself towards dawn in the valley before the idol. Then it was daybreak—the world was full of light and colour. He was seated before the house door, worn out and exhausted, when, raising his head, he saw Emmeline's figure coming out from amidst the distant trees on the other side of the sward.

* * * * * * *

He could not move for a moment, then he sprang to his feet and ran towards her. She looked pale and dazed, and she held something in her arms; something wrapped up in her scarf. As he pressed her to him, the something in the bundle struggled against his breast and emitted a squall—just like the squall of a cat. He drew back, and Emmeline, tenderly moving her scarf a bit aside, exposed a wee face. It was brick-red and wrinkled; there were two bright eyes, and a tuft of dark hair over the forehead. Then the eyes closed, the face screwed itself up, and the thing sneezed twice.

"Where did you *get* it?" he asked, absolutely lost in astonishment as she covered the face again gently with the scarf.

"I found it in the woods," replied Emmeline.

Dumb with amazement, he helped her along to the house, and she sat down, resting her head against the bamboos of the wall.

"I felt so bad," she explained; "and then I went off to sit in the woods, and then I remembered nothing more, and when I woke up it was there."

"It's a baby!" said Dick.

"I know," replied Emmeline.

Mrs. James's baby, seen in the long ago, had risen up before their mind's eyes, a messenger from the past to explain what the new thing was. Then she told him things—things that completely shattered the old "cabbage bed" theory, supplanting it with a truth far more wonderful, far more poetical, too, to him who can appreciate the marvel and the mystery of life.

"It has something funny tied on to it," she went on, as if she were referring to a parcel she had just received.

"Let's look," said Dick.

"No," she replied; "leave it alone."

She sat rocking the thing gently, seeming oblivious to the whole world, and quite absorbed in it, as, indeed, was Dick. A physician would have shuddered, but, perhaps fortunately enough, there was no physician on the island. Only Nature, and she put everything to rights in her own time and way.

When Dick had sat marvelling long enough, he set to and lit the fire. He had eaten nothing since the day before, and he was nearly as exhausted as the girl. He cooked some breadfruit, there was some cold fish left over from the day before; this, with some bananas, he served up on two broad leaves, making Emmeline eat first.

Before they had finished, the creature in the bundle, as though it had smelt the food, began to scream. Emmeline drew the scarf aside. It looked hungry; its mouth would now be pinched up and now wide open, its eyes opened and closed. The girl touched it on the lips with her finger, and it seized upon her fingertip and sucked it. Her eyes filled with tears, she looked appealingly at Dick, who was on his knees; he took a banana, peeled it, broke off a bit and handed it to her. She approached it to the baby's mouth. It tried to suck it, failed, blew bubbles at the sun and squalled.

"Wait a minute," said Dick.

There were some green cocoa-nuts he had gathered the day before close by. He took one, removed the green husk, and opened one of the eyes, making an opening also in the opposite side of the shell. The unfortunate infant sucked ravenously at the nut, filled its stomach with the young cocoa-nut juice, vomited violently, and wailed. Emmeline in despair clasped it to her naked breast, wherefrom, in a moment, it was hanging like a leech. It knew more about babies than they did.

NOTE ON COLETTE'S

"THE GENTLE LIBERTINE"

Minne, a middle-class Paris girl who has just reached puberty, devours the newspaper stories about the apaches. *She adores their leader, "Curly," and his "Queen," the "Copperhead." In her childish unconscious quest for pain in love, she fancies she has replaced his "Queen."*

Her seventeen-year-old cousin, Antoine, abashed at his pimples, his thin straggly beard, and his ungainliness, worships Minne. When he asks her to promise to marry him when they are both adults, she calmly tells him that she is engaged. And she asks the poor boy to write a letter to her fiancé. At this point, our selection begins.

COLETTE

The Gentle Libertine, I

Most celebrated of modern French women writers, Colette (b. 1873) in the course of a varied career (which included vaudeville) has written forty of the most finished and sensuous novels of our time. Varying her style, her psychological approach, and her subject-matter, she is the "historian and poet of the instincts." The touch of skin, of earth, of stone; scents, colors; the suggestions of taste; discrimination in tactile and auditory minutiae—these are the provinces of Colette, "painter of the sensations." For her, every emotion, sentiment, and opinion has a physical vesture: she knows nothing abstract. This most feminine of writers makes "aseptic everything she touches . . . by style." In *The Gentle Libertine* (1909) her adolescent girl, half aware of her needs, dreams herself to be a citizen of a criminal world of fantasy, and she creates a fable of her behavior in order to astonish her lover, a young cousin. This is probably the best story ever written of an as-yet-innocent coquette. A second selection from this book appears on page 357.

CONFIDENCE! She had found the word that could break Antoine's will. He would obey, he would write the letter, borne on by that flood of sublime cowardice that absolves so many complacent husbands, so many humble lovers who must be sharers.

"My beloved, do not let your dear eyes be amazed that this handwriting is not mine. I am ill and a devoted friend . . ."

Minne's voice hesitated, seemed to be translating word for word, a difficult text.

". . . a devoted friend is helping me send word to you to reassure you so that you can go on freely with your dangerous career . . ."

"His dangerous career," ruminated Antoine. "Is he a chauffeur? or a wild animal trainer at the circus?"

"Have you got that far, Antoine? . . . your dangerous career. My beloved, when shall I again be in your arms drinking in the dear perfume of your being? . . ."

A great wave of bitterness swept over the heart of the writer. He endured it all as if it were a painful dream, in which one suffered mortal agony, still knowing it was only a dream . . .

"The dear perfume . . . At times I would like to forget that I belonged to you.—Are you that far, Antoine?"

He was not. He turned towards her the face of a drowning man, an ugly, suffering face which at once irritated Minne:

"All right then! Go!"

He did not go. He shook his head as if to chase away a fly.

"You are not telling the truth," he said at last. "Or you have lost your senses. You have never belonged to a man."

Nothing exasperated Minne so much as incredulity. She got down on her feet with a brusque grace. Her luminous black eyes, wide open, sought to stab Antoine with their anger.

"Yes!" she cried, "I did belong to him!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

And she threw at him as an unanswerable argument:

"Yes! I tell you, he is my lover!"

The effect on Antoine of so categoric a word was at least surprising. His stubborn tense attitude crumbled. He put his penholder down carefully on the edge of the inkwell, got up without knocking over his chair and approached the bed where Minne trembled. She only noticed that the pupils of Antoine's eyes shone with the curious wild gentleness of a beast about to spring.

"You have a lover? You have slept with him?" he asked very low.

How melodiously his voice insisted on those last words! Minne's bright flush confirmed, he thought, her guilt.

"Certainly, I have slept with him."

"Really? And where was that?"

By a reversal of rôles she did not notice, it was she, Minne, who answered, embarrassed, an aggressive Antoine, full of an unforeseen lucidity.

"Where? Why should that interest you?"

"It does interest me."

"Well! At night, on the embankment of the fortifications."

He reflected, fixed on Minne his narrow shrewd eyes.

"At night . . . on the embankment. You went out of the house? Your mother didn't know? No, what I mean is that he was no doubt someone whose presence you couldn't have explained in your mother's house?"

She replied "yes" with a grave nod of the head.

"Someone of low class? An inferior . . ."

"Inferior!"

Bolt upright, trembling, she shot out the thunderbolt of her wide somber eyes, her fine little nostrils pinched and angry, palpitated. "Low! Inferior!" That silent menacing lover, whose supple body lolling across the walk feigned the posture of a graceful death! Narcissus in a striped sweater, fainting on the bank of a stream. Inferior? her hero of so many nights, who, under his coat, hid the warm and bloody knife that carried the red marks of so many appalled fingers!

"Forgive me, Minne," said Antoine gently. "But you spoke of a dangerous career . . . what does he do your . . . your lover?"

"I can't tell you that."

"A dangerous career," pursued Antoine patiently, craftily. "There are many dangerous careers. He might be a man who lays tiles on roofs, or even an automobile driver."

She fixed murderous eyes on him.

"You would like to know what he does?"

"Yes, I should."

"He is an assassin."

Antoine raised his eyebrows, his second-rate Mephistophelian brows, opened a mocking mouth and let out a roar of young laughter. This fine old joke made him feel like himself once more. He slapped his sides in a manner more appreciative than distinguished. Minne shook with rage; in her eyes, which reflected a September sunset, came a sharp desire to kill Antoine.

"You don't believe me?"

"Yes. Yes indeed. Oh, Minne, what a little dolt you are!"

Minne lost all reason and patience.

"So you don't believe me? And what if I showed him to you! If I showed him to you in the flesh. He is handsome. Oh, much handsomer than you'll ever be. He has a blue and red jersey sweater, a black and violet checked cap, hands as gentle as a lady's. Every night he kills horrible old women who hide their money under their mattresses, and dreadful old men like Corne. He is head of a terrible gang that are terrorizing Levallois-Perret. He waits for me at night at the corner of the Avenue Gourgaud. . . ."

She waited breathless, seeking another, a final arrow to press home:

". . . he waits for me there and when Mama's in bed I find him and we spend the night together!"

Her strength was spent, she leaned back on her pillows, waiting for Antoine to burst out laughing. But he showed no sign except a circumspect uneasiness, a regret that he had egged Minne on to this outburst which might bring back her fever.

"I'm going, Minne."

She closed her eyes, suddenly pale and brought to her senses:

"That's right! Go!"

"Minne, you aren't angry with me?" She signaled "no, no" with a weary gesture.

"Good night, Minne."

He lifted from the sheet a little dry hand, hot and inert, he hesitated to kiss it and put it back gently, like a fragile thing that he did not dare handle.

* * * * * * *

Since Minne had left the Maison Sèche, several Sundays had rolled by, bringing once more Uncle Paul and Antoine to the traditional Sunday tart. Minne turned her savage eyes away from them, because the sight of Uncle Paul, yellowed, rumpled, offended her fresh and cruel youth, because Antoine, in his black uniform with its gold buttons, had returned to his guise of a child of a theatrical troupe, overgrown, weedy, sun-baked.

Minne had started her classes again and no longer even bothered to look at the corner of the deserted avenue for her unknown, to whom she had dedicated all her dreams: the sidewalk either glistened with rain or resounded with frost. In the evening Mama embroidered near the lamp and turned at times an innocent scrutiny upon the face of her darling; she once more recovered the busy peace of a tender, blind motherhood. Mama must not be reproached if God gave her the gift of love without discernment. Many an honest pullet has hatched under her clipped wings a flying ace, a blue-green metallic-coated gorgeous wild duck!

* * * * * * *

"It is he! It is he! I recognize his walk!"

Minne, almost hurtling out, clutched the window ledge with her two hands, icy-cold with exaltation. Her eyes, her heart recognized him despite the night. . . .

"Only he can walk like that! How supple he is! He sways at every step like a dancer. Prison has thinned him down, I think. Is that the same cap, the one with the black and violet checks? He is waiting for me! He has come back! I want him to see me. He is going away . . . No! He is coming back."

A tall vagrant, almost boneless in his suppleness, was smoking as he walked up and down. The light from an open window at that hour surprised him: he raised his head. Minne, frantic, could have sworn that she recognized the lifted face by its special pallor; the smoke of his cigarette mounting towards her was incense in her nostrils.

"Psst," said Minne.

The man turned, with a motion that revealed the beast on the alert. Oh, it was that kid up there? What could she want?

A clear little voice asked:

"Were you looking for me? Shall I come down?"

Taking a chance because the silhouette seemed young and slim, the man made an obscene and teasing gesture with his two hands. "That's surely the signal!" said Minne to herself. "But I can't go down like this."

Feverishly she began to put on the fantastic costume of the year before. The red ribbon at her throat, the apron with the pockets, the knotted hair, and—oh! that comb that would fall out all the time! Should she take a coat? No: two lovers are never cold. Quickly then, downstairs.

Minne's tripping feet wearing red mules skimmed over the carpet. A terrible creaking! Minne, in her haste, forgot the eighteenth step, which groaned like a rusty door. She flattened herself out, her hands against the wall, and held her breath. Nothing stirred in the house. Farther down, the safety lock obeyed the little groping hand. The door opened silently; but how to close it without making a noise?

"Well! I just won't close it!"

It was a fresh almost cool night. Through the barren plane trees the wind whistled, there was not a leaf to rustle, only the gas flames of the street-lamps tottered before its rush.

"But where was he now?"

There was no one in sight along the avenue. What direction should she take? Minne, in despair, wrung her hands. Ah! over yonder a form was receding.

"Yes, yes, it is he!"

One hand clutching her falling knot of hair, the other holding up her light skirt, thus she threw herself in pursuit. The unusual hour, the gravity of what she was doing made Minne fly on feet that scarcely touched the ground. She might have stretched out her arms and flown, without surprise. She only thought "It's my soul rushing on!" And spurred herself to a faster pace, for despite her speed the tall form of him whom she followed was soon only a wavy ghost on the Porte Malesherbes side. With Célénie or with Mama she had never been so far. The boulevard stretched on and on staked out with trees. Heavens, where had Curly gone? She did not dare cry out and she didn't know how to whistle. Was that he, over there? . . . No, it was a tree! . . . Ah, there he was! . . . She stopped for a moment to reassure her fluttering heart, then went on, and joined someone who seemed to be waiting, someone mute, someone who was hiding, under the limp brim of a felt hat—an anonymous face!

"Pardon me, sir—"

The little breathless voice could hardly speak. All the man revealed of himself under the greenish gaslight was the bluish stubble of a three days' beard. His forehead, his eyes, even his hands thrust into his pockets were invisible. But Minne was not afraid of this faceless apparition which seemed tall and untenanted like an ancient suit of armor.

"Mister, did you happen by any chance to see a man go past . . . a man going that way, a tall man who swayed a little as he walked?"

The shoulders of the man rose and fell in a shrug. Minne felt upon her a gaze that she could not see and became impatient:

"And yet, he must have gone right by you."

Her stubborn little face bravely looked at the face in the shadow. Her racing had reddened her cheeks, her eyes reflected the gaslight like two pools of water; she closed and opened her mouth and tapped her foot, waiting for an answer. The empty man again shrugged his shoulders and at last said in a heavy voice:

"No one."

She shook her head angrily and dashed away even more quickly, furious at the time lost and ready to weep with anguish.

It was darker that way. But the gentle slope was fine for running and she ran on and on trying all the while to hold on to her knot of hair which bothered her. She careened against a peaceful pair of policemen who were walking their beat along the boulevard. A bump against a square shoulder made Minne stagger; she dashed on, in her ears rang their exclamations:

"Who threw that little devil on me . . . Where did she come bursting from . . . ?"

She ran on, the wind whistling past her temples. She tore straight along the boulevard. Curly could only have followed these fortifications. They marked off the debatable ground of his disputed kingdom, that uncertain sanctuary. Beneath in the open tunnel a train crawled by, passed Minne, covering her with clouds of smoke. Her tired feet slowed down; her head bent, she stopped to stare at her slippers, the toes of which were already caked with mud. She looked through the iron railing at the red eye of the train: "Where am I?"

Fifty yards away, a gulf of shadow cut off the road; above the blackness roared a long and angry beast, plumed with smoke, breathing red and yellow fire.

"Another train! Crossing above the boulevard? I don't know that bridge. If that's one of their safe hiding places, then, *he's* waiting for me there!"

She ran on. Her lips trembled; her decisions followed on the heels of each other, easy, irrefutable. Wasn't she feeling that second sight bestowed by love alone? She had a most curious sensation: it was as if the hand which held the knot of her hair was lifting her up bodily on three delicate fingers. The wind she swallowed was parching her throat.

The black mouth of the bridge growing larger before her did not frighten her. She divined there the threshold of another life, the sacred approach to mysteries. . . . Meshes of her hair escaping from the tortoiseshell comb fell at the nape of her neck and palpitated there like feathers. Something moved, blacker than the reddish shadow, something seated on the ground under the misty rainbow that encircles the gaslight. Was it he? . . . No! A woman squatted there, two women and a puny man. Minne's quiet footsteps had not warned them of her approach; besides the bridge was still reverberating with a deafening rumble.

The child, on the run, tried to force her eyes to distinguish amidst these earthy silhouettes the noble structure of him whom she pursued. He wasn't there. These were his fellows, his subjects perhaps; the man—a sort of deformed child, sitting on the walk—wore the well-known jersey, the limp cloth cap outlining his skull. Behind the group was an extended grove of fluted posts.

It's like Pompeii, decided Minne, completely concealed in the shadow of one column.

One of the two women had just risen. She wore an apron, a waist, shabby but loud in color; her hair wrapped about her head was of a metallic blackness, so soft and so tightly drawn that it shone like the carapace of a warrior-beetle. Minne looked at her avidly and made comparisons. She lacked the particular chic of that coiffure, from which not a hair escaped, and the red woollen waist with its butterfly of coarse lace at the collar. But it was particularly a quality almost indescribable that was missing. Their attitude was at once aggressive and discouraged, here was the cynicism and the animal laziness of people who lived, scratched, satisfied all their wants in the open. "These are henceforth my people," Minne said to herself proudly. "They will tell me, if I question them, where Curly is waiting for me."

The woman who had risen stretched out her masculine arms with a loud yawn. She had a wide back and a protruding corset. She coughed convulsively and swore to God in a tired voice.

"I must hurry up and decide," said Minne within herself. The knot of hair firmly in place, her hands in her heart-shaped pockets, she came out of her sentry-box of shadows and advanced one foot from under her skirt:

"Pardon me, ladies, but did you see a man go by—a tall man with a swaying walk?"

She spoke in a high, quick voice like a little actress who had more temperament than experience. The two poor creatures, their backs flat against the wall, looked stupidly at this masquerading infant.

"Who's that?" asked the tired voice of the one who had coughed.

"It's just a kid," said the other. "A funny kid."

Below, the boy gathered together like a toad, laughed jerkily, then spoke in the nasal voice of cripples.

"What you lookin' for, baby?"

Wounded, Minne lowered on this aborted being a regal glance:

"I'm looking for Curly."

The abortion rose, ceremoniously, and uncovered his head revealing a scalp sparsely decorated with hair.

"I'm Curly, at your service."

At the giggling of the two women, Minne frowned and was about to go on her way, when the vagrant came nearer and slipped her these words in confidence:

"I *have* curly hair, but it is only seen in private."

Then as he was about to enlace Minne with an artful grip, all her nerves rose to her defense and she dashed away, pursued for a minute by the flopping of agile shoes, till the voice of the two women insisted:

"Antonin! Antonin! Leave her alone, I tell you!"

It was not fear that made Minne's heart and her flying feet race so fast, but wounded pride, the wounding humiliation felt by a queen embraced by a valet. "They didn't dream who I was! It will go hard with them if they belong to me later on! I will say to him, to *him*—but where is he? For heaven's sake where can he be?" She was too tired to run, but she forced herself to walk quickly. For how long now had she been following this path and this hillside? How few people there were tonight! Where were they all? Perhaps they were having a grand council in some den? She wanted to sit down on a bench to empty out her slippers which were full of sand and of sharp little stones. But a couple locked together, whose embrace slackened at her approach, chased her away with words whose meaning remained obscure to her.

A "psst!" suddenly bursting out from the hillside, stopped her. With sudden joy she cried: "Is that you?"

"Yes, it's me," replied a falsetto voice, changed on purpose.

"Who?"

"Me. You know me, dearie. Why, sure you know me."

"You are not the one I'm looking for," replied Minne severely.

She went off again. A moment later she drew herself aside to let a flock of sheep go past; their dry little hoofs tearing the ground, the baaing up and down a discordant scale, the peaceful cheesy smell. Minne heard the snuffle of the dogs that came and went, running against the warm woolly rumps. The flock passed like a hailstorm, and Minne thought for a minute that they had carried off all the night noises with them. But a train tore raging along, spitting behind it a shrapnel of red coals.

Leaning her back against a tree, Minne stopped. She kept repeating, to fight off her lassitude: "I'll find him eventually. It's my own fault too! I lost a lot of time dressing myself up! Did he not suppose that I had changed my mind? But I never hesitated for a moment! I trust him fully."

Straightening up, smoothing her silvery hair with her two hands, she braved the night, for her eyes concealed enough light to fight against the shadows. She lifted her aching feet, looked in the misty gaslight at her hands stiff with cold, and laughed to herself, a sad, ironic laugh.

"If Mama were here, she would be sure to say: 'My dear Minne, what is the use of my buying you white kid gloves!' But that's the least of my worries. If I only had a brush or a rag to get some of this mud off my slippers? To appear this way before him with muddy feet!"

In order to find a little grass to wipe off the soles, she crossed the deserted avenue, and jumped with fright. She had not seen a woman striding along the soft sand with the doleful stride of an animal who has long ago discovered that there was no outlet to his cage. This woman displayed the same helmet-like knotted hair, that weapon of love and battle, the cotton apron and the shoes with pitiful laces dragging in the puddles of water. . . .

"Madame!" cried Minne resolutely, for the poor creature was hurrying away, jealous, no doubt, of her solitude, the solitude of a frightened animal used to hunting alone and to being content with the poorest of prey. "Madame! . . ."

The woman turned, but continued to draw away backwards. She had a squarish body like a man's, a purple face, and little piggy shifting eyes. Minne, who found in her a faint resemblance to Célénie, again adopted her most regal manner, tossing her somewhat disheveled head!

"Madame, I am lost. Can you tell me the name of this avenue?"

A flat toneless voice, like that of farm watchdogs that sleep outside, answered after a silence:

"Well, I suppose it's written on the street signs!"

"I'm aware of that," said Minne impertinently. "But I don't know the neighborhood. I'm looking for someone. And someone that you must surely know, madame!"

"Someone I know?"

This mannish creature repeated Minne's last word in a thick speech vaguely tinged with terror:

"I don't know many people."

Minne wanted to laugh and coughed because she was so cold:

"Don't try to be sly with me! I'm one of you . . . or I'm going to be!"

The woman kept her distance. She did not seem to understand. She lifted her head to the black sky and said, just for something to say:

"There'll be more rain before the morning."

Minne tapped her foot. Rain! Low creature! Rain, wind, thunder, did any of that matter? There were only day and night. By day, sleeping, smoking, dreaming. Then under the velvety tent of night, killing, loving, grabbing gold pieces still sticky with blood. Ah! To find Curly, to forget in his arms her enslaved childhood, to obey him passionately and him alone! Minne pawed the ground with eagerness, with repressed feverish enthusiasm.

"You look pretty young," murmured the hollow voice of the hoarse watchdog.

Minne looked at the woman through her lashes:

"Very young! I'll be sixteen in eight months."

"Hurry up then. You'll be much safer when those eight months are by."

"Why?"

"Do you work alone?"

"I don't work," said Minne proudly. "Others work for me."

"You are lucky. Sisters bigger or littler'n you?"

"I haven't any sisters. Besides, what's that to you? Just tell me this: I'm looking for Curly. I have something to tell him, something very important."

The sad monster came up closer to look at this frail little girl, who spoke right out as if she were in her own home, who was dressed up as if for a carnival, her hair disheveled in the most shameless fashion, and who asked so persistently for "Curly."

"Curly? Who is this Curly?"

"Why, *Curly!* The one who was with the Copperhead, the head of the gang at Levallois-Perret."

"The one who was with Copperhead? The one . . . Do I know people like that? Chase yourself, you little blackguard! And try and get this through your head. I'm an honest woman, and no artful dodger has been hiding in my skirts since the exposition of eighty-nine. Look at the girl. Ain't got no more hair than my hand, and she's talking about gangs. Nothing on her mind but Curly this and Curly that or the other! Beat it now and beat it quick, before I give you a fancy curling that will last you for a good long time!"

"Well, that is simply unbelievable!"

Minne, out of breath, sat down on the edge of the sidewalk, finally free from the fearsome pursuit of the old hag who had rushed after her with froglike bounds and incomprehensible menaces. Minne, scared, had rushed to the other side of the boulevard, down one little street, then into another, until she had reached this black and narrow alley where the wind howled as if out the country and froze Minne's damp shoulders, making her draw in her elbows and cough. She tried hard to understand.

"Yes, it is extraordinary. They all treat me like an enemy. There are too many things that I don't understand. All the same I have been on my feet for ages and I can't stand any more."

Her back was bent with exhaustion, her head hung to her knees like a wilted flower. For the first time since her flight, Minne thought of her warm bed, her white and rose-colored room. She was ashamed to know herself cowering and afraid, ashamed that her dress was muddy, her back bent. It had all to be done over again. She had to return, hope once more for the coming of Curly, once more escape, dressed up and all excited. Oh! if only that night would come, complete, overflowing with love! If only that arm, whose treacherous strength she divined, could guide her first steps! If only that infallible hand could lift, one by one, the veils that hung over all mystery, for Minne felt herself worn out to the point of exhaustion, dead-tired. . . .

NOTE ON JAMES JOYCE'S

"A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN"

Stephen Dedalus, the artist, is one of a large Dublin family whose father is a clever, banal spirit of uncertain employments. The family sinks into poverty. Stephen, however, is a brilliant scholar and wins a large prize.

Our first selection shows him, after he has spent his prize money on utopian follies, made sharply aware of his lusts. A faithful Catholic, dreading the depths of his nature, he nevertheless wanders in search of sin, ending in a street-walker's parlor. He is overcome by shame and repentance. Like so many youths, he alternates between his romantic love for Emma, his girl-ideal, and the grimmer aspects of sex.

In our third selection ("He looked northward towards Howth") this conflict between lust and idealism is replaced by the vision of beauty as the poet's stuff: the girl he sees calls up the range of his creative imagination.

Our fourth selection ("Towards dawn he awoke") brings on the flowering of beauty. He views the procession of girls who have each left a momentary impress on him, and there is revealed to him the meaning implicit in childhood love.

At the end he meets his childhood love in the flesh. But he has heard the call of art. He must leave his country and fashion his life far away from the tyranny of the hearth.

JAMES JOYCE

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

IN THE course of his training for the Jesuit order James Joyce (1882-1941) experienced a spiritual crisis that provided the subject for his impressionist autobiography, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), a book that changed the inflection of modern letters. He began his career with delicate lyrics and a realist play, then proceeded with sketches of fellow Dubliners that wrenched the English short story out of its neat form. Living on the Continent most of his life, he centered his books on Ireland. Nearly blind but gifted with a rich tenor voice, he took words to be infinitely more than specific carriers of concepts; for Joyce their cumulative sound-sense served wider and profounder needs of communication. In his monumental *Ulysses* (1922), he took up the age-old conflict between philistine and artist, to produce the grandest ascent of English letters in our century, a work whose resources of language, allusion, and poetry would rank it with Shakespeare, except for its dissolving position as the last commentary on a society almost dead. In his last book, *Finnegan's Wake,* Joyce views society as having died. In the following selection the young poet's love for Emma is crossed by sin, repentance, and creative ambition.

HE turned to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien. He cared little that he was in mortal sin, that his life had grown to be a tissue of subterfuge and falsehood. Beside the savage desire within him to realise the enormities which he brooded on nothing was sacred. He bore cynically with the shameful details of his secret riots in which he exulted to defile with patience whatever image had attracted his eyes. By day and by night he moved among distorted images of the outer world. A figure that had seemed to him by day demure and innocent came towards him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy. Only the morning pained him with its dim memory of dark orgiastic riot, its keen and humiliating sense of transgression.

He returned to his wanderings. The veiled autumnal evenings led him from street to street as they had led him years before along the quiet avenues of Blackrock. But no vision of trim front gardens or of kindly lights in the windows poured a tender influence upon him now. Only at times, in the pauses of his desire, when the luxury that was wasting him gave room to a softer languor, the image of Mercedes traversed the background of his memory. He saw again the small white house and the garden of rosebushes on the road that led to the mountains and he remembered the sadly proud gesture of refusal which he was to make there, standing with her in the moonlit garden after years of estrangement and adventure. At those moments the soft speeches of Claude Melnotte rose to his lips and eased his unrest. A tender premonition touched him of the tryst he had then looked forward to and, in spite of the horrible reality which lay between his hope of then and now, of the holy encounter he had then imagined at which weakness and timidity and inexperience were to fall from him.

Such moments passed and the wasting fires of lust sprang up again. The verses passed from his lips and the inarticulate cries and the unspoken brutal words rushed forth from his brain to force a passage. His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself. Its murmur besieged his ears like the murmur of some multitude in sleep; its subtle streams penetrated his being. His hands clenched convulsively and his teeth set together as he suffered the agony of its penetration. He stretched out his arms in the street to hold fast the frail swooning form that eluded him and incited him: and the cry that he had strangled for so long in his throat issued from his lips. It broke from him like a wail of despair from a hell of sufferers and died in a wail of furious entreaty, a cry for an iniquitous abandonment, a cry which was but the echo of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of a urinal.

He had wandered into a maze of narrow and dirty streets. From the foul laneways he heard bursts of hoarse riot and wrangling and the drawling of drunken singers. He walked onward, undismayed, wondering whether he had strayed into the quarter of the Jews. Women and girls dressed in long vivid gowns traversed the street from house to house. They were leisurely and perfumed. A trembling seized him and his eyes grew dim. The yellow gasflames arose before his troubled vision against the vapoury sky, burning as if before an altar. Before the doors and in the lighted halls groups were gathered arrayed as for some rite. He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries.

He stood still in the middle of the roadway, his heart clamouring against his bosom in a tumult. A young woman dressed in a long pink gown laid her hand on his arm to detain him and gazed into his face. She said gaily:

—Good night, Willie dear!

Her room was warm and lightsome. A huge doll sat with her legs apart in the copious easychair beside the bed. He tried to bid his tongue speak that he might seem at ease, watching her as she undid her gown, noting the proud conscious movements of her perfumed head.

As he stood silent in the middle of the room she came over to him and embraced him gaily and gravely. Her round arms held him firmly to her and he, seeing her face lifted to him in serious calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping. Tears of joy and relief shone in his delighted eyes and his lips parted though they would not speak.

She passed her tinkling hand through his hair, calling him a little rascal.

—Give me a kiss, she said.

His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly, slowly. In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her.

With a sudden movement she bowed his head and joined her lips to his and he read the meaning of her movements in her frank uplifted eyes. It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour. . . .

* * * * * * *

O grave, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?

Every word of it was for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his disclosed conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin. Yes, the preacher was right. God's turn had come. Like a beast in its lair his soul had lain down in its own filth but the blasts of the angel's trumpet had driven him forth from the darkness of sin into the light. The words of doom cried by the angel shattered in an instant his presumptuous peace. The wind of the last day blew through his mind; his sins, the jewel-eyed harlots of his imagination, fled before the hurricane, squeaking like mice in their terror and huddled under a mane of hair.

As he crossed the square, walking homeward, the light laughter of a girl reached his burning ear. The frail, gay sound smote his heart more strongly than a trumpet-blast, and, not daring to lift his eyes, he turned aside and gazed, as he walked, into the shadow of the tangled shrubs. Shame rose from his smitten heart and flooded his whole being. The image of Emma appeared before him and under her eyes the flood of shame rushed forth anew from his heart. If she knew to what his mind had subjected her or how his brute-like lust had torn and trampled upon her innocence! Was that boyish love? Was that chivalry? Was that poetry? The sordid details of his orgies stank under his very nostrils. The sootcoated packet of pictures which he had hidden in the flue of the fireplace and in the presence of whose shameless or bashful wantonness he lay for hours sinning in thought and deed; his monstrous dreams, peopled by apelike creatures and by harlots with gleaming jewel eyes; the foul long letters he had written in the joy of guilty confession and carried secretly for days and days only to throw them under cover of night among the grass in the corner of a field or beneath some hingeless door or in some niche in the hedges where a girl might come upon them as she walked by and read them secretly. Mad! Mad! Was it possible he had done these things? A cold sweat broke out upon his forehead as the foul memories condensed within his brain.

When the agony of shame had passed from him he tried to raise his soul from its abject powerlessness. God and the Blessed Virgin were too far from him: God was too great and stern and the Blessed Virgin too pure and holy. But he imagined that he stood near Emma in a wide land and, humbly and in tears, bent and kissed the elbow of her sleeve.

In the wide land under a tender lucid evening sky, a cloud drifting westward amid a pale green sea of heaven, they stood together, children that had erred. Their error had offended deeply God's majesty though it was the error of two children; but it had not offended her whose beauty "is not like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon, but like the morning star which is its emblem, bright and musical." The eyes were not offended which she turned upon him nor reproachful. She placed their hands together, hand in hand, and said, speaking to their hearts.

—Take hands, Stephen and Emma. It is a beautiful evening now in heaven. You have erred but you are always my children. It is one heart that loves another heart. Take hands together, my dear children, and you will be happy together and your hearts will love each other.

The chapel was flooded by the dull scarlet light that filtered through the lowered blinds; and through the fissure between the last blind and the sash a shaft of wan light entered like a spear and touched the embossed brasses of the candlesticks upon the altar that gleamed like the battle-worn mail armour of angels.

Rain was falling on the chapel, on the garden, on the college. It would rain for ever, noiselessly. The water would rise inch by inch, covering the grass and shrubs, covering the trees and houses, covering the monuments and the mountain tops. All life would be choked off, noiselessly: birds, men, elephants, pigs, children: noiselessly floating corpses amid the litter of the wreckage of the world. Forty days and forty nights the rain would fall till the waters covered the face of the earth.

It might be. Why not?

* * * * * * *

He looked northward towards Howth. The sea had fallen below the line of seawrack on the shallow side of the breakwater and already the tide was running out fast along the foreshore. Already one long oval bank of sand lay warm and dry amid the wavelets. Here and there warm isles of sand gleamed above the shallow tide: and about the isles and around the long bank and amid the shallow currents of the beach were lightclad figures, wading and delving.

In a few moments he was barefoot, his stockings folded in his pockets, and his canvas shoes dangling by their knotted laces over his shoulders: and, picking a pointed salteaten stick out of the jetsam among the rocks, he clambered down the slope of the breakwater.

There was a long rivulet in the strand: and, as he waded slowly up its course, he wondered at the endless drift of seaweed. Emerald and black and russet and olive, it moved beneath the current, swaying and turning. The water of the rivulet was dark with endless drift and mirrored the highdrifting clouds. The clouds were drifting above him silently and silently the seatangle was drifting below him; and the grey warm air was still: and a new wild life was singing in his veins.

Where was his boyhood now? Where was the soul that had hung back from her destiny, to brood alone upon the shame of her wounds and in her house of squalor and subterfuge to queen it in faded cerements and in wreaths that withered at the touch? Or, where was he.

He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and wilful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the seaharvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air.

A girl stood before him in midstream: alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.

She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

—Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.—

He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea, crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on!

He halted suddenly and heard his heart in the silence. How far had he walked? What hour was it?

There was no human figure near him nor any sound borne to him over the air. But the tide was near the turn and already the day was on the wane. He turned landward and ran towards the shore and, running up the sloping beach, reckless of the sharp shingle, found a sandy nook amid a ring of tufted sand knolls and lay down there that the peace and silence of the evening might still the riot of his blood. . . .

* * * * * * *

Towards dawn he awoke. O what sweet music! His soul was all dewy wet. Over his limbs in sleep pale cool waves of light had passed. He lay still, as if his soul lay amid cool waters, conscious of faint sweet music. His mind was waking slowly to a tremulous morning knowledge, a morning inspiration. A spirit filled him, pure as the purest water, sweet as dew, moving as music. But how faintly it was inbreathed, how passionlessly, as if the seraphim themselves were breathing upon him! His soul was waking slowly, fearing to awake wholly. It was that windless hour of dawn when madness wakes and strange plants open to the light and the moth flies forth silently.

An enchantment of the heart! The night had been enchanted. In a dream or vision he had known the ecstasy of seraphic life. Was it an instant of enchantment only or long hours and years and ages?

The instant of inspiration seemed now to be reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of cloudy circumstances of what had happened or of what might have happened. The instant flashed forth like a point of light and now from cloud on cloud of vague circumstance confused form was veiling softly its afterglow. O! In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh. Gabriel the seraph had come to the virgin's chamber. An afterglow deepened within his spirit, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a rose and ardent light. That rose and ardent light was her strange wilful heart, strange that no man had known or would know, wilful from before the beginning of the world: and lured by that ardent roselike glow the choirs of the seraphim were falling from heaven.

Are you not weary of ardent ways,
Lure of the fallen seraphim?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

The verses passed from his mind to his lips and, murmuring them over, he felt the rhythmic movement of a villanelle pass through them. The roselike glow sent forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise. Its rays burned up the world, consumed the hearts of men and angels: the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart.

Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze
And you have had your will of him.
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

And then? The rhythm died away, ceased, began again to move and beat. And then? Smoke, incense ascending from the altar of the world.

Above the flame the smoke of praise
Goes up from ocean rim to rim
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Smoke went up from the whole earth, from the vapoury oceans, smoke of her praise. The earth was like a swinging swaying censer, a ball of incense, an ellipsoidal ball. The rhythm died out at once; the cry of his heart was broken. His lips began to murmur the first verses over and over; then went on stumbling through half verses, stammering and baffled; then stopped. The heart's cry was broken.

The veiled windless hour had passed and behind the panes of the naked window the morning light was gathering. A bell beat faintly very far away. A bird twittered; two birds, three. The bell and the bird ceased: and the dull white light spread itself east and west, covering the world, covering the roselight in his heart.

Fearing to lose all, he raised himself suddenly on his elbow to look for paper and pencil. There was neither on the table; only the soup plate he had eaten the rice from for supper and the candlestick with its tendrils of tallow and its paper socket, singed by the last flame. He stretched his arm wearily towards the foot of the bed, groping with his hand in the pockets of the coat that hung there. His fingers found a pencil and then a cigarette packet. He lay back and, tearing open the packet, placed the last cigarette on the window ledge and began to write out the stanzas of the villanelle in small neat letters on the rough cardboard surface.

Having written them out he lay back on the lumpy pillow, murmuring them again. The lumps of knotted flock under his head reminded him of the lumps of knotted horsehair in the sofa of her parlour on which he used to sit, smiling or serious, asking himself why he had come, displeased with her and with himself, confounded by the print of the Sacred Heart above the untenanted sideboard. He saw her approach him in a lull of the talk and beg him to sing one of his curious songs. Then he saw himself sitting at the old piano, striking chords softly from its speckled keys and singing, amid the talk which had risen again in the room, to her who leaned beside the mantelpiece a dainty song of the Elizabethans, a sad and sweet loth to depart, the victory chant of Agincourt, the happy air of Greensleeves. While he sang and she listened, or feigned to listen his heart was at rest but when the quaint old songs had ended and he heard again the voices in the room he remembered his own sarcasm: the house where young men are called by their christian names a little too soon.

At certain instants her eyes seemed about to trust him but he had waited in vain. She passed now dancing lightly across his memory as she had been that night at the carnival ball, her white dress a little lifted, a white spray nodding in her hair. She danced lightly in the round. She was dancing towards him and, as she came, her eyes were a little averted and a faint glow was on her cheek. At the pause in the chain of hands her hand had lain in his an instant, a soft merchandise.

—You are a great stranger now.—

—Yes. I was born to be a monk.—

—I am afraid you are a heretic.—

—Are you much afraid?—

For answer she had danced away from him along the chain of hands, dancing lightly and discreetly, giving herself to none. The white spray nodded to her dancing and when she was in shadow the glow was deeper on her cheek.

A monk! His own image started forth a profaner of the cloister, a heretic Franciscan, willing and willing not to serve, spinning like Gherardino da Borgo San Donnino, a lithe web of sophistry and whispering in her ear.

No, it was not his image. It was like the image of the young priest in whose company he had seen her last, looking at him out of dove's eyes, toying with the pages of her Irish phrasebook.

—Yes, yes, the ladies are coming round to us. I can see it every day. The ladies are with us. The best helpers the language has.—

—And the church, Father Moran?—

—The church too. Coming round too. The work is going ahead there too. Don't fret about the church.—

Bah! he had done well to leave the room in disdain. He had done well not to salute her on the steps of the library. He had done well to leave her to flirt with her priest, to toy with a church which was the scullery-maid of christendom.

Rude brutal anger routed the last lingering instant of ecstasy from his soul. It broke up violently her fair image and flung the fragments on all sides. On all sides distorted reflections of her image started from his memory: the flower girl in the ragged dress with damp coarse hair and a hoyden's face who had called herself his own girl and begged his handsel, the kitchen-girl in the next house who sang over the clatter of her plates, with the drawl of a country singer, the first bars of *By Killarney's Lakes and Fells,* a girl who had laughed gaily to see him stumble when the iron grating in the footpath near Cork Hill had caught the broken sole of his shoe, a girl he had glanced at, attracted by her small ripe mouth as she passed out of Jacob's biscuit factory, who had cried to him over her shoulder:

—Do you like what you seen of me, straight hair and curly eyebrows?—

And yet he felt that, however he might revile and mock her image, his anger was also a form of homage. He had left the classroom in disdain that was not wholly sincere, feeling that perhaps the secret of her race lay behind those dark eyes upon which her long lashes flung a quick shadow. He had told himself bitterly as he walked through the streets that she was a figure of the womanhood of her country, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness, tarrying awhile, loveless and sinless, with her mild lover and leaving him to whisper of innocent transgressions in the latticed ear of a priest. His anger against her found vent in coarse railing at her paramour, whose name and voice and features offended his baffled pride: a priested peasant, with a brother a policeman in Dublin and a brother a potboy in Moycullen. To him she would unveil her soul's shy nakedness, to one who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite rather than to him, a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life.

The radiant image of the eucharist united again in an instant his bitter and despairing thoughts, their cries arising unbroken in a hymn of thanksgiving.

Our broken cries and mournful lays
Rise in one eucharistic hymn
Are you not weary of ardent ways?
While sacrificing hands upraise
The chalice flowing to the brim
Tell no more of enchanted days.

He spoke the verses aloud from the first lines till the music and rhythm suffused his mind, turning it to quiet indulgence; then copied them painfully to feel them the better by seeing them; then lay back on his bolster.

The full morning light had come. No sound was to be heard: but he knew that all around him life was about to awaken in common noises, hoarse voices, sleepy prayers. Shrinking from that life he turned towards the wall, making a cowl of the blanket and staring at the great overblown scarlet flowers of the tattered wallpaper. He tried to warm his perishing joy in their scarlet glow, imaging a roseway from where he lay upwards to heaven all strewn with scarlet flowers. Weary! Weary! He too was weary of ardent ways.

A gradual warmth, a languorous weariness passed over him, descending along his spine from his closely cowled head. He felt it descend and, seeing himself as he lay, smiled. Soon he would sleep.

He had written verses for her again after ten years. Ten years before she had worn her shawl cowlwise about her head, sending sprays of her warm breath into the night air, tapping her foot upon the glassy road. It was the last tram; the lank brown horses knew it and shook their bells to the clear night in admonition. The conductor talked with the driver, both nodding often in the green light of the lamp. They stood on the steps of the tram, he on the upper, she on the lower. She came up to his step many times between their phrases and went down again and once or twice remained beside him forgetting to go down and then went down. Let be! Let be!

Ten years from that wisdom of children to his folly. If he sent her the verses? They would be read out at breakfast amid the tapping of eggshells. Folly indeed! Her brothers would laugh and try to wrest the page from each other with their strong hard fingers. The suave priest, her uncle, seated in his armchair would hold the page at arm's length, read it smiling and approve of the literary form.

No, no: that was folly. Even if he sent her the verses she would not show them to others. No, no: she could not.

He began to feel that he had wronged her. A sense of her innocence moved him almost to pity her, an innocence he had never understood till he had come to the knowledge of it through sin, an innocence which she too had not understood while she was innocent or before the strange humiliation of her nature had first come upon her. Then first her soul had begun to live as his soul had when he had first sinned: and a tender compassion filled his heart as he remembered her frail pallor and her eyes, humbled and saddened by the dark shame of womanhood.

While his soul had passed from ecstasy to languor where had she been? Might it be, in the mysterious ways of spiritual life, that her soul at those same moments had been conscious of his homage? It might be.

A glow of desire kindled again his soul and fired and fulfilled all his body. Conscious of his desire she was waking from odorous sleep, the temptress of his villanelle. Her eyes, dark and with a look of languor, were opening to his eyes. Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm odorous and lavish limbed, enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life: and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain.

Are you not weary of ardent ways,
Lure of the fallen seraphim?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze
And you have had your will of him.
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

Above the flame the smoke of praise
Goes up from ocean rim to rim.
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Our broken cries and mournful lays
Rise in one eucharistic hymn.
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

While sacrificing hands upraise
The chalice flowing to the brim.
Tell no more of enchanted days.

And still you hold our longing gaze
With languorous look and lavish limb!
Are you not weary of ardent ways?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

* * * * * * *

April 15. Met her today point blank in Grafton Street. The crowd brought us together. We both stopped. She asked me why I never came, said she had heard all sorts of stories about me. This was only to gain time. Asked me, was I writing poems? About whom? I asked her. This confused her more and I felt sorry and mean. Turned off that valve at once and opened the spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus, invented and patented in all countries by Dante Alighieri. Talked rapidly of myself and my plans. In the midst of it unluckily I made a sudden gesture of a revolutionary nature. I must have looked like a fellow throwing a handful of peas up into the air. People began to look at us. She shook hands a moment after and, in going away, said she hoped I would do what I said.

Now I call that friendly, don't you?

Yes, I liked her today. A little or much? Don't know. I liked her and it seems a new feeling to me. Then, in that case, all the rest, all that I thought I thought and all that I felt I felt, all the rest before now, in fact . . . O, give it up, old chap! Sleep it off!

April 16. Away! Away! . . .

ALAIN-FOURNIER

The Wanderer

Alain-Fournier (1882-1915) was born in the heart of France and grew up in the marshy, deserted Sologne, the setting for his masterpiece, *Le Grand Meaulnes* (translated as *The Wanderer*). Handsome, lonely, grave, he stood apart from his fellow students and their impassioned competitiveness. He visited England as a teacher and became enchanted with the green, misty island and with its literary tradition. Returning to France, he associated himself with Charles Péguy in the latter's spiritual program for French youth; but World War I carried him off—he died in battle, three years after his masterpiece had appeared. After his death, the fame of *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1912) spread throughout France. The country was sick to death of obscenity and cynicism and rallied to Alain-Fournier's bold and dreamy conception of love; indeed, the French novel remained flooded with poetic adventure for an entire decade. Alain-Fournier's generous, tormented, and unpredictable hero, Meaulnes, is the modern novel's most elusive lover. Havelock Ellis has written a veritably adoring introduction to the English translation of this work.

IN all my life I have received only three letters from Meaulnes.[1] They are still at home in a chest of drawers. Each time I read them again, I feel the same sadness as of old.

The first arrived two days after he had left.

My dear François,

To-day, as soon as I got to Paris, I went in front of the house mentioned. I saw nothing. There was no one there. No one will ever be there.

The building mentioned by Frantz[2] is a private house one storey high. Mademoiselle de Galais' room must be on the first floor. The top windows are the most hidden by the trees, but one sees them quite well from the pavement, as one walks by. All the curtains have been drawn and it would be mad to hope that, one day, Yvonne de Galais' face would appear from behind the drawn curtains.

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[1] The story is told throughout by Meaulnes's lifelong friend, François Seurel.

[2] Frantz, brother of Yvonne de Galais, the girl who became the childhood dream-love of both Meaulnes and Seurel, at a fantastic party given in an old castle owned by the then-wealthy de Galais family. The letters begin with Meaulnes's futile waiting outside the Paris house in which he believes she still lives.

The house stands on a boulevard. . . . It was raining a little on trees already green. You could hear the sharp clanging of the tramcars always going by.

I walked up and down, underneath the windows, for nearly two hours. I went in for a drink at a bar close by, so as not to be taken for a burglar up to some mischief. Then I returned to my hopeless watch.

Night came. Windows lit up nearly everywhere, but not in that house. There is certainly no one there. And yet Easter is approaching.

Just as I was about to leave, a girl or a young woman—I don't know which—came and sat on one of the rain-soaked benches. She was dressed in black with a small white collar. When I left, she was still there, not having stirred in spite of the cold of the evening, and waiting, goodness knows for what or for whom. You see, Paris is full of fools like me.

AUGUSTIN

Time passed. I waited in vain for a word from Meaulnes all Easter Monday and the following days—days so calm after the Easter fever that just to wait for summer seemed the only thing to be done. June brought examinations and a terrible heat, a suffocating haze hovering over the countryside, without a breath of wind to dispel it. Night afforded no coolness and consequently no respite from this torture. It was during this unbearable month of June that I received the second letter from Admiral Meaulnes.[3]

June, 189..

MY DEAR CHAP,

This time all hope is gone. I have known it since yesterday evening. My grief, which I hardly felt at first, has been increasing ever since.

Every evening I went and sat on that bench, watching, pondering, hoping in spite of all.

Yesterday, after dinner, the night was dark and stifling. People were talking on the pavement, under the trees. Above the dark leaves—toned to green by the lights—flats were lit up on the second and third storeys. Here and there, summer had forced a window to be thrown wide open. . . . The lamp could be seen standing alight on the table, scarcely changing the sultry obscurity of June; you could see almost to the other end of the room. . . . Ah! if the dark window of Yvonne de Galais had suddenly lit up as the others, I believe I should have found courage to go up the stairs, to knock and enter . . .

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[3] Meaulnes's nickname

The girl of whom I spoke to you was still waiting there, like me. I came to think that she might know the house, and I asked her.

"I know," she said, "that at one time, in this house, a girl and her brother used to come for the holidays. But I learned that the brother had run away from his parents' country-house and was never found again, and that the girl had married. That explains why the house is shut up."

I walked off. Ten steps farther, I stumbled against the curb of the pavement and nearly fell. During the night—it was last night—when the women and the children left off their noise in the back yards, and I might have gone to sleep, I began to hear the cabs rolling by in the street. They passed only now and then. But no sooner had one gone by than, in spite of myself, I waited for the next: the horse's bell, his hoofs clinking on the asphalt . . . And it went on repeating: empty town, your poor love gone, eternal night, summer, fever . . .

Seurel, dear man, I am in great distress.

Augustin

Few confidences in these letters, whatever you may think! Meaulnes did not tell me either why he had remained silent so long, or what he now intended to do. I had the impression that he was breaking with me, his adventure over, as he was breaking with his past. It was no good my writing to him; I received no reply. . . .

I received the last of the three letters I ever received from Meaulnes, on my return to school, at the end of November, while I was working with melancholy zeal for my final Matriculation.

"I still go under that window," he wrote. "I still wait, not that there is any hope: just sheer madness. At the end of these cold autumn Sundays, about the time when night comes, I cannot decide to go home and close the shutters of my room without returning to stand there in the chilly street.

"I am like the mad woman of Sainte-Agathe who would go to her front door every minute and look towards the station, one hand raised above her eyes, to see if her dead son were coming home.

"Seated on a bench, shivering and wretched, I take pleasure in imagining that some one is going to take me gently by the arm. . . . I should turn round. It would be she. 'I am a little late,' she would simply say. And all suffering and all madness vanish away. We enter our home. Her furs are cold, her veil damp; she brings in with her a flavour of the outside mist; and as she draws near the fire, I see the flaxen fairness of her hair and the soft outlines of her beautiful face bent towards the flame . . .

"Alas! the pane remains white, with the curtain drawn across it. And should the girl from the Lost Land draw it aside, I have no longer anything to tell her.

"Our adventure is at an end. Winter, this year, is as dead as the grave. Perhaps when we die, perhaps death alone will give us the key, the sequence and the end of this adventure that failed.

"Seurel, the other day, I asked you to think of me. Now, on the contrary, it is better to forget me. It would be better to forget everything.

"A. M." . . .

* * * * * * *

THE FOLLOWING SUMMER

And he went away towards the lawn, leaving me alone. I walked some hundred yards along the road to kill time. And at the first bend I saw Yvonne de Galais riding side-saddle on an old white horse, so frisky this morning that she was obliged to pull the reins to prevent him trotting. M. de Galais, in silence, painfully walked on foot by the horse's head. On the way they had most likely taken turns in using the old mount.

Seeing me alone, the girl smiled, jumped nimbly to the ground, and, giving the reins to her father, came towards me while I hurried up to her.

"I am pleased at finding you alone," she said. "For I wouldn't show old Bélisaire to any one but you, and I don't want to put him with the other horses. He's too ugly and too old, for one thing, then I always fear he might get hurt by the others. Yet he's the only one I dare to ride, and when he's dead, I shall never go on horseback . . ."

In Mademoiselle de Galais as in Meaulnes I felt, beneath this charming animation and this grace which seemed so peaceful, something impatient and almost anxious. She talked faster than usual. In spite of a rosy flush on her cheeks, there was an intense pallor here and there round her eyes, on her forehead, in which all her trouble was manifest.

We agreed to tie Bélisaire to a tree, in the little wood near the road. Old M. de Galais, still not saying a word, produced the halter from the holster and tied up the animal—rather low, so it seemed to me. I promised to send presently from the farm hay and oats and straw . . .

And Mademoiselle de Galais arrived on the lawn just as I picture her in former days, walking towards the shore of the lake, when Meaulnes saw her for the first time.

Taking her father's arm and with her left hand holding aside the flap of the long cloak that wrapped her round, she drew near the guests with her usual expression, at once so serious and so childlike. I walked by her. All the guests, who had scattered about or were playing farther out, stood up and gathered to welcome her. There was a brief moment of silence while every one gazed as she approached.

Meaulnes had mingled with the group of young men and nothing marked him out from amongst his companions except his height; yet there were others almost as tall. He did nothing to draw attention to himself, making no gesture, taking no step forward. I could see him, dressed in grey, standing motionless, and, like every one else, keeping his eyes fixed on the beautiful girl advancing. At last, however, with an unconscious and uneasy gesture, his hand went over his bare head as if amongst the well-brushed heads of his companions, to hide his own, so rough, and with hair cropped like a peasant's.

Then the group gathered round Mademoiselle de Galais. She was introduced to the girls and boys she did not know . . . My friend's turn was soon to come and I felt as anxious as he could be. I was preparing to make the introduction myself.

But, before I could say anything, the girl advanced towards him, with surprising assurance and gravity:

"I recognise Augustin Meaulnes," she said.

And she held out her hand to him.

Newcomers drew near almost at once to greet Yvonne de Galais and the two young people found themselves parted. By some wretched accident they were not put together for lunch at the same little table. Yet Meaulnes seemed to have recovered confidence and courage. I was isolated between Delouche and M. de Galais and more than once from this distance I saw my friend wave his hand to me.

It was only towards the end of the evening, after boating on the neighbouring pond, games, bathing, and chatting had started everywhere, that Meaulnes found himself again in the girl's presence. We were sitting on some garden chairs which we had brought, talking with Delouche, when Mademoiselle de Galais, deliberately leaving a group of young people amongst whom she seemed bored, made her way towards us. I remember that she asked us why we were not boating on The Guelders lake as the others were.

"We had a few goes this afternoon," I replied; "but it's rather dull and we soon tired of it."

"Well! why shouldn't you go on the river?" she said.

"The current's too strong, we might get carried away."

"We want a motor-boat," said Meaulnes, "or that steamboat there used to be."

"We no longer have it," she said in a rather low voice. "We've sold it."

And there was a moment's awkward silence. . . .

These two talked, but invariably, with an obstinacy of which he must have been unaware, Meaulnes always came back to the marvels of the old days. And each time the poor tortured girl had to repeat to him that everything was gone: the old queer and oddly shaped house rased to the ground; the lake drained and filled with earth; and the children in their charming costumes dispersed for ever . . .

"Ah!" Meaulnes would simply say with despair and as if each of these disappearances showed him to be right and the girl or myself wrong . . .

We were walking side by side . . . I vainly tried to create a diversion from the sadness which was coming over all three of us. For again Meaulnes, with one abrupt question, would give way to his haunting idea. He asked information about everything he had seen of old: the little girls, the driver of the old berlin, the ponies of the race.

". . . Are the ponies also sold? So, there are no longer horses on the estate? . . ."

She replied that there were none. She did not speak of Bélisaire.

Then he conjured up the things in his bedroom; the chandeliers, the tall looking-glass, the old broken lute. . . . He inquired about all this with unwonted eagerness, as if he wanted to convince himself that nothing survived of his fine adventure, and that the girl would not bring back to him one piece of wreckage which could prove that they had not both lived in a dream—as the diver brings up from the bottom of the sea mere pebbles and seaweeds . . .

Mademoiselle de Galais and I could not refrain from smiling sadly; then she decided to explain to him:

"You will never see again the beautiful mansion that M. de Galais and I had arranged for our poor Frantz. We spent our lives doing as he wished us. He was such a strange, charming boy. But everything vanished with him on that evening of the betrothal that never came off. M. de Galais had then already lost his fortune without our knowing. Frantz was in debt and his former friends—getting news of his disappearance—at once brought us their claims. We became poor. Madame de Galais died, and in a few days we lost all our friends. Could Frantz come back—if he is not dead—and find again his friends and his fiancée, and the interrupted wedding take place—then perhaps everything would be as of old! But can the past come to life again?"

"Who knows?" said Meaulnes thoughtfully. And he put no more questions.

We were walking, all three of us, without noise on grass that was short and ever so slightly touched with yellow. Augustin had close to him on his right the girl whom he had thought for ever lost. Whenever he asked one of his cruel questions, her charming and troubled face would slowly turn towards him as she answered; and once, while speaking, she gently placed her hand on his arm in a gesture full of trust and surrender. Why was Admiral Meaulnes there like a stranger, like some one who has not found what he was looking for and for whom nothing else has any interest? Three years earlier he might not have been able to bear this happiness without terror, without madness, perhaps. But whence came this emptiness, this remoteness, this powerlessness to be happy which now possessed him?

We were approaching the little wood where M. de Galais had that morning tied up Bélisaire; the sun, now declining, lengthened our shadows upon the grass. On the far end of the lawn we heard the voices of the little girls and others playing games—voices mellowed by distance to a happy buzz; and we remained silent in the marvellous quiet; then we heard some one singing on the other side of the wood, from the direction of The Guelders, the farm by the river. The voice was young and distant, and belonged to some one taking cattle to water: the tune was rhythmic as a dance, but the man sang it with a drawl and dragged it as though it were some old sad ballad:

My shoes are red . . .
Good-bye, my lover!
My shoes are red . . .
Good-bye for ever! . . .

Meaulnes had raised his head to listen. It was actually one of the tunes which the belated peasants had sung that last evening of the fête at the nameless manor, when everything had fallen to pieces. Nothing but a memory—the most wretched memory—of those beautiful days which would return no more.

"Do you hear that?" said Meaulnes in a subdued voice. "Oh! I am going to see who it is." And thereupon he dashed into the little wood. Almost at once the voice was silent; one heard for a moment longer the man whistling to his beast still farther away—then nothing more . . .

I looked at the girl. Pensive and dismayed, she kept her eyes fixed on the copse where Meaulnes had just disappeared. How many times, in later days, was she not to look thus pensively at the gap through which Admiral Meaulnes was vanishing for ever!

She turned towards me.

"He's not happy," she said sorrowfully.

She added: "And perhaps I can't do anything for him? . . ."

I hesitated to reply, fearing that Meaulnes, who must have reached the farm in an instant and was now coming back through the wood, might hear what we were saying. I was, however, on the point of encouraging her; of advising her not to mind being rather blunt with the tall boy; that most likely some secret tormented him which he could never confide to her or any one of his own accord—when suddenly a cry came from the other side of the wood; then we heard a thudding, as of a horse furiously pawing the ground, and the noise of wrangling in broken sentences . . . I understood at once that an accident had happened to old Bélisaire and I ran towards the place whence the uproar came. Mademoiselle de Galais followed me from afar. At the other end of the lawn our movement must have been noticed, for directly I entered the copse, I heard the shouts of people hurrying to meet us.

Old Bélisaire, tied up too low, had caught one of his forefeet in the halter; he had not moved until M. de Galais and Delouche, in the course of their walk, had come near him; then frightened, upset by the unusual hay given him, he had begun to struggle furiously; the two men had tried to free him, but so clumsily that they had only succeeded in further entangling him, at the risk, too, of dangerous kicks. It was then that Meaulnes, on his way back from The Guelders, had chanced upon the group. Furious at so much bungling, he had pushed the two men aside, almost knocking them into a bush. He had freed Bélisaire cautiously but very deftly. Too late, though; the damage was done; the horse appeared to have strained a tendon or else to have broken something, for he drooped his head dismally and kept one of his legs held up under his belly; he was trembling all over; his saddle, too, was half off his back. Meaulnes was stooping to feel the leg and examine it and said nothing.

When he looked up, nearly every one had gathered around, but he saw no one. He was red with anger.

"I would like to know," he called out, "who tied him up like this! And left his saddle on all day! And who dared to saddle so old a horse, scarcely fit for the lightest gig."

Delouche was about to say something—to take the blame upon himself.

"Shut up! It's your fault. I saw you tugging at his halter like a fool to get him loose."

And bending down again he began rubbing the horse's leg with the palm of his hand.

M. de Galais, who so far had said nothing, made the mistake of attempting to come out of his reserve. He stammered:

"Naval officers are accustomed to . . . My horse."

"Oh! He's yours, is he?" said Meaulnes, a little calmer, but very red, turning his head towards the old man.

I thought he was going to change his tone, to apologise. He paused a moment. And then I saw that he took a bitter, despairing pleasure in aggravating the situation, in smashing everything for ever, as he said with insolence:

"Well, I shouldn't boast of it, if I were you!"

Some one suggested: "Perhaps cold water . . . If we bathed it at the ford."

"This horse must be taken away at once," said Meaulnes, without replying, "while he can still walk—and there's no time to be lost! He should be put in the stable and never taken out again."

Several young fellows immediately offered themselves. But Mademoiselle de Galais at once thanked them. Her face on fire and ready to burst into tears, she said good-bye to every one and even to Meaulnes, who, utterly abashed, dared not look at her. She took the animal by the reins as one catches hold of somebody's hand, more to feel close to him than to lead him . . . The late summer wind was so mild on the Sand Pit road that it seemed like May, and the leaves in the hedges quivered in the south wind . . . We saw her set off thus, her arm partly out of her cloak, and holding in her slim hand the thick leather rein. Her father walked painfully by her side . . .

Sad end to the evening! Little by little everybody picked up his belongings and the picnic things; chairs were folded, tables taken down; the carriages, loaded with luggage and guests, went away one by one while hats were raised and handkerchiefs waved. We were the last to go with my Uncle Florentin who, like us, was silently brooding over his sad and great disappointment.

Then we drove swiftly off in our well-hung carriage behind our beautiful chestnut. The wheels grated on the sand as we took the corner, and soon Meaulnes and I, who sat at the back, saw the cross-road which old Bélisaire and his owners had taken slowly disappear.

Then my friend, the last person in the world to cry, turned suddenly towards me and his face was twisted by the coming of irresistible tears.

"Stop, will you?" he said, placing a hand on Florentin's shoulder. "Don't bother about me. I'll come back by myself on foot."

He put a hand on the mud-guard of the carriage and vaulted to the ground at one leap. He turned back, to our consternation, and started running: he ran right back to the lane we had just passed, the lane leading to the Sand Pit. He must have reached the manor by the avenue of firs he had followed in the old days when, like a tramp hiding in the thicket, he had heard the mysterious conversation of the unknown beautiful children.

And this was the evening on which, sobbing, he asked Mademoiselle de Galais to marry him. . . .

FLIGHT AFTER THE MARRIAGE

Weeks and months went by. Days now of the past! Lost happiness! The girl who had been the fairy, the princess, the mysterious love dream of our youth, it was now my lot to take by the arm, finding the necessary words to soften her grief, while my friend had run away. . . .

Night approached. Fine rain began to fall. With bowed head I watched my shoes getting wet in the rain and shining—paying them no heed. Darkness slowly enclosed me, and the cool of night, without troubling my reverie. I dreamed sadly and tenderly of the muddy lanes at Sainte-Agathe on such a September evening; I pictured the square full of mist, the butcher boy whistling on his way to the pump, the lights of the café, the waggonette and its merry occupants under a shield of open umbrellas, arriving at Uncle Florentin's at the end of the holidays . . . And I was sadly saying to myself, "What good is all this happiness if my friend Meaulnes cannot be there, nor his young wife . . ."

It was then I raised my head and saw her two steps away. Her shoes made on the sand a slight noise which I had mistaken for raindrops from the hedge. Her head and shoulders were wrapped in a big shawl of black wool and the fine rain was like powder on the hair over her forehead. She must have seen me from her bedroom window, which looked onto the garden, and had come down to me. In the old days Mother used thus to worry about me, hunting me up to say, "You must come in," but beginning herself to enjoy the night walk in the rain, she would only say, very gently, "You will catch cold!" and remain by me for a long talk. . . .

Yvonne de Galais held out a burning hand; then she gave up the idea of taking me indoors, and sat down on the mossy, rusted bench at the end which was not too wet, while I remained standing, one knee on the bench, and stooped to catch what she was saying.

She at first scolded me in a friendly way for having thus shortened my holidays.

"But I had to come back as soon as I could," I replied, "to keep you company."

"The fact is," she said, almost in whispers and with a sigh, "I am still alone. Augustin has not come back . . ."

Taking this sigh to express regret, an implied reproach, I began slowly to say: "So many mad schemes in so beautiful a mind! Perhaps the love of adventure stronger than anything . . ."

But she interrupted me. And it was there, that very evening, that for the first and last time she spoke to me of Meaulnes.

"Do not talk like this, François Seurel," she said gently, "you are my friend. It is only we—it is only me, who am guilty. Think what we did . . . We've said to him: 'Here's happiness; here's what you've looked for during all your youth; here's the girl who was the aim of all your dreams!' How could anyone thus pushed into happiness not be seized with misgiving, then fear, then terror! How could he have resisted the temptation of running away!"

"Yvonne," I said softly, "you knew quite well you were that very happiness, that very girl . . ."

"Ah!" she sighed. "How could such an arrogant thought ever have entered my head? It is that thought caused all the trouble. I had said to you, 'Perhaps I can't do anything for him.' And in my heart I was thinking, 'He has searched for me so long and I love him so, I am bound to make him happy.' But when I saw him by my side, with all this fever and anxiety, his mysterious remorse, I understood that I was but a helpless woman like others. 'I am not worthy of you,' he kept repeating when daylight came at the end of our wedding night. And I tried to comfort him, to reassure him. But nothing could quiet his anguish. Then I said: 'If you must go, if I have come to you at a moment when nothing can make you happy, if you must leave me for a time so as to come back later, after having found peace, I myself ask you to go . . .' "

In the dusk I saw that she had raised her eyes towards me. It was a sort of confession she had made to me and she was anxiously waiting for my approval or condemnation. But what could I say? Certainly, within me, I pictured the Admiral Meaulnes of old, so clumsy, so awkwardly shy, that he would rather be punished than make excuses for himself or ask permission which would naturally have been granted. No doubt Yvonne de Galais should have shaken him out of this, and, taking his head in her hands, have said to him: "What do I care what you did! I love you; are not all men sinners?" No doubt, with all her generosity and her willingness to sacrifice herself, she had been greatly in the wrong in thus throwing him back on the road to adventure . . . But how could I condemn so much kindness, so much love! . . .

There was a long moment of silence during which, both deeply stirred, we could hear the rain drip in the hedges and beneath the branches of the trees.

"So he went away in the morning," she went on. "There was no longer anything separating us. And he kissed me, like a husband leaving his young wife for a long journey . . ."

She got up. I took her feverish hand in mine, then her arm, and we walked up the avenue, now plunged in darkness.

"Yet, did he ever write to you?" I asked.

"Never," she replied.

And then the thought came to us both of the adventurous life he was at this moment leading on the roads of France or Germany; so we began to speak of him as we had never done before. Forgotten details, old recollections came back to our minds while we slowly walked to the house, at each step coming to a long stop, the better to exchange our memories . . . And for a long time—as far as the garden-gate—I heard in the night the gentle, low voice of the young wife; and I too was caught up in my old enthusiasm and never wearied of talking to her, with deep friendship, of him who had forsaken us . . .

It is in this house that Yvonne de Galais, Augustin Meaulnes' wife, died yesterday evening. A stranger would take it for a chapel, so great is the silence which has settled since yesterday on this desolate spot.

So this is what this beautiful morning of the new school year, this treacherous autumn sun which glides under the branches, had in store for us. How could I fight against hideous revolt and a blinding flood of tears! We had again found the beautiful girl. We had won her. She was my friend's wife and I myself loved her with that deep, secret friendship which is never told. I used to look at her and be happy like a little child. I might one day have married another girl, and she would have been the first to whom I should have confided the great secret news . . .

Yesterday's notice has been left close to the bell on one side of the door. The coffin has already been brought into the hall downstairs. In the room on the first floor, it is the child's nurse who greets me, relates to me the end, and gently pushes the door ajar . . . She is there. No more fever nor struggle. No more flush nor waiting. Nothing but silence, and, framed in cotton wool, a hard face, unsensitive and white, a dead forehead from which the hair rises thick and stiff. . . .

The funeral is for midday. The doctor fears the rapid decomposition which sometimes follows on an embolism. This is why the face, as well as the whole body, is surrounded by cotton wool soaked in carbolic.

The last toilet has been made—she had been dressed in her beautiful frock of dark blue velvet bespangled with little silver stars, its fine but old-fashioned leg-of-mutton sleeves flattened and folded under; but at the moment of bringing up the coffin it is found that there is not room to turn it in the very narrow corridor. It will have to be hauled up through the window from the outside, by means of a rope, and be lowered again in the same way . . . It is then that M. de Galais, still bent over these ancient things amidst which he searches for some lost tokens, suddenly steps in with terrifying impetuosity.

"Rather than allow such a dreadful thing to be done," he says, in a voice broken by tears and anger, "I will take her myself in my arms and carry her down . . ."

THE RETURN OF MEAULNES

It was not quite day: it was the twilight of a beautiful morning in September; and the shed from which I was hurriedly getting my tackle was half in darkness.

There I was silent and busy when suddenly I heard the iron gate opening and a footfall on the gravel path.

"Ha! ha!" said I to myself. "Here come these fellows sooner than I thought. And here am I, not ready yet! . . ."

But the man who came into the courtyard was unknown to me. He was, so far as I could distinguish, a great bearded fellow dressed like a sportsman or a poacher. Instead of coming to fined me where the others knew that I always was at the time we had arranged to meet, he went straight to the front door.

"Good!" I thought; "it's a friend of theirs whom they've invited without telling me and they've sent him on ahead to explain."

The man gently played with the latch of the door, making no noise. But on coming out I had fastened the door behind me. He behaved in the same way at the kitchen door. Then he hesitated a moment and turned towards me a troubled face, made clear in the half light. And it was only then that I recognised Admiral Meaulnes.

For a long moment I remained where I was, terrified, in despair, suddenly gripped again by all the grief which his return awakened. He had disappeared behind the house, had walked round it, and returned, hesitating.

Then I approached him and without saying a word I threw my arms round him, sobbing. Immediately he understood:

"Ah!" he said in an abrupt voice. "She's dead, is that not so?"

And he stood where he was, upright, deaf, motionless, and terrible. I took him by the arm and gently led him towards the house. It was day now. At once, so that the hardest task should be accomplished, I made him mount the stairs which led to the death chamber. As soon as he was in, he fell on his knees by the bed and for a long time kept his head buried in his arms.

At last he rose with bewildered eyes, swaying, not knowing where he was. And still guiding him by the arm, I opened the door by which this room communicated with that of the little girl. She had awakened of her own accord—while her nurse was downstairs—and had boldly sat up in her cot. One could just see her surprised face turned towards us.

"Here is your daughter," I said.

He started and looked at me.

Then he seized her and lifted her up in his arms. He could not see her well at first because he was crying. Then, a little to divert this great emotion and this flood of weeping, holding her tightly against him all the while on his right arm, he turned his lowered head to me and said:

"I've brought them back, the other two . . . You must go and see them in their house."

And indeed, when I went early in the morning, thoughtful and almost happy towards the house of Frantz which Yvonne de Galais had once shown me empty, I saw from the distance, sweeping the doorstep, a sort of young housewife with a turned-down collar, an object of curiosity and excitement to several little cowherds in their Sunday clothes on the way to mass.

Meanwhile the little girl became annoyed at being squeezed up, and as Augustin, his head on one side to conceal and check his tears, continued not to look at her, she gave him a great slap with her little hand on his bearded, wet mouth.

This time the father lifted his daughter on high, jumped her up on his outstretched arms, and looked at her with a kind of smile. She was pleased and clapped her hands . . .

I had stepped back a little to see them better. Rather let down and yet wonder-struck, I realised that the little girl had at last found in him the playfellow she had been dimly expecting . . . Admiral Meaulnes had left with me one joy; I felt that he had come back to take it away from me. And already I could imagine him at night, wrapping his daughter in his cloak and setting out with her for new adventures.

PANTELEIMON ROMANOV

Without Cherry Blossom

Born in the heart of Old Russia, Romanov (1887-1938) studied law in Moscow but early turned to letters. In 1909 he began a cycle of novels, *Russia,* which he continued until 1924, through wars and revolution; and it was largely because of its appeal to his sense of history that Romanov enthusiastically accepted the new Soviet order. His novels read as though Russia were synonymous with destiny; and yet Romanov is as adept at depicting intimate life as at recording social history. He has written impressively of woman's need for love even after she has won social and economic freedom. For to him freedom is the door to life, but life itself remains the subject-matter of the novelist. His *Three Pairs of Silk Stockings* and *Letters of Women,* both issued in America, picture intellectuals who could not adapt themselves to Soviet society; but Romanov is probably best known to us for the short story that follows. The Revolution had produced its extremes in the name of "free love." Lenin denounced this tendency in no uncertain language, and Romanov's vindication of the lyric aspects of love was a writer's way of criticizing a social situation. Love under socialism had found a writer; from that time on, it was to produce a school.

IT seems as if there never had been so magnificent a spring before.

But, dear Verusha, I feel sad.

Sad, ill, as if I'd done something rather second-rate. . . .

I've a bottle with a broken neck in my window at the hostel, and a broken, withered little branch of wild cherry in it. I brought it home last night. . . . And when I look at that bottle, somehow I want to cry.

I'll be brave and tell you all. I lately made the acquaintance of a comrade from another faculty. I am far removed from sentiment of any kind, as he would say; far from bewailing lost innocence, and even further from any gnawing of conscience over my first "fall." But there is something that rubs me up the wrong way, not clear, confused, ever present.

I'll tell you later, with "shameless" frankness, how it all happened. But first of all I would like to put some questions to you.

When you and Paul were united for the first time, didn't you wish that the day of your first love might be to you a sort of festival day, somehow or other different from the everyday?

For instance, would it have seemed humiliating to you, on that spring festival day of your life, to go out of doors in dirty boots, or to wear a torn or soiled blouse?

I ask you because all my acquaintances, the folk of my own age, look on the matter differently. I do not seem to have sufficient pluck to think and act just as I feel.

It needs a good deal of effort to go against the accepted opinion of those among whom one lives.

With us the accepted attitude towards the beautiful is one of youthful disdain, and it is the same with regard to any daintiness or correctness of attire or fastidiousness in the home.

Our hostel is all dirt, filth, disorder, tumbled beds. Cigarette ends on the window ledges, flimsy partitions between the cubicles all covered with torn placards and advertisements. There is not one of us who tries to beautify his dwelling, and as there is a rumour that we are going to be transferred to another building, the students are even more careless than they would be ordinarily, and frequently do deliberate damage to the place.

It is as if there were someone or other before whom we are ashamed to be seen occupying ourselves with such trifles as a clean and beautiful room, and healthy fresh air in it. It is not because we have serious business on hand and no time, but because we feel obliged to despise everything connected with care for beauty.

That is the more strange because we all know that the powers that be, our poverty-stricken proletarian powers, spend a vast amount of money and energy simply to make everything beautiful, putting flower gardens all over the place, the like of which was unknown under the old regime of squires and capitalists, though they prided themselves on their love of an elegant, beautiful life. All Moscow gleams with stucco, and our university, which stood a hundred years looking like a tumbledown police station, has now been converted into the most beautiful building in Moscow.

And we . . . feel an involuntary pride in the fact that it is so beautiful. But, for all that, our own life inside these walls, purified by our own new government, our own life is dominated by filth and disorder.

All the girls and our men-comrades behave as if they were afraid of being accused of delicacy and good manners. They deliberately cultivate a coarse and debauched way of talking and slap one another on the hips. And when they refer to sex they make use of the most coarse expressions, the most disgusting street slang.

The most abominable epithets have with us full civic rights. And when some of our girls, I will not say all, a few, feel mortified, something even worse sets in. The rest try to accustom them "to the mother tongue."

Cynicism, the tone of coarse debauch and the trampling underfoot of all fastidiousness alone have success. Perhaps it is because we are a poverty-stricken lot, and having nothing to spend on dress, we just spit upon the whole business, or like to pretend that we do. Or it may be that we think of ourselves as the soldiers of the revolution, for whom naturally sentimental notions and fastidiousness have no place. But if we are soldiers of the revolution we ought somehow to take an example from the power we have set up, and strive for beauty in life not simply for the sake of the beautiful, but for the sake of cleanliness and health. For that reason it seems about time that we decided to give up this exaggerated, over-emphasised barracks style.

But, you know, the majority like it. To say nothing of our men, our girls like it; it gives them more freedom and demands little exercise of will on their part.

But this neglect of the beautiful, the pure and the healthy, leads to an appalling hooliganism in our intimate relationships. It begets a coarseness, a lack of ceremony, a fear of showing the least human delicacy of feeling or of sensibility or care towards one's woman friend or any of the girls.

It all comes from the fear of infringing the unwritten moral code.

Things are different with you at the academy. I am sometimes sorry that I entered the university. My mother, who is a village midwife, looks up to me with a sort of pious respect as to a higher being, but I often wonder what she would think if she saw the filth in which we live and heard the latest bad language that we habitually use.

For us love does not exist; we have only sexual relationships. And so, love is scornfully relegated to the realm of "psychology," and our right to existence is only understood physiologically.

The girls live with their men friends, and it is a small matter to go with them for a week or a month, or promiscuously, for one night only. And anyone who is trying to find in love anything beyond the physiological is laughed down as mental or a bad case.

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What does he think he is? An ordinary student in high boots and a blue blouse unbuttoned at the neck. He always pushes back his untidy locks from his brow with his hands.

His eyes attracted me. When he is by himself and is walking along the corridors, one feels a great seriousness and calm in his eyes.

But directly he fell in with any of his fellow-students he became, it seemed to me, exaggeratedly noisy, loose and coarse. The girls inspired him with self-confidence because he was handsome, the men because he was clever. He seemed to be afraid to lose the sort of leadership which he had.

I saw two men in him, one possessing a good deal of inner strength and seriousness of mind; the other, a vulgar wag who irritated you by the way he has of showing off and impressing others with the appearance of being very coarse, much more coarse than, in fact, he is.

Yesterday at sunset we went out for the first time together. Evening stillness had settled on the city and the street noises were subdued. The air was fresh and there was a pleasant odour of the damp earth coming from the squares.

"Come along to my place, I don't live far from here," said he.

"No, I'm not coming."

"What's that? Etiquette?"

"It's not etiquette at all. That, in the first place. In the second place, it's very pleasant out of doors at the moment."

He shrugged his shoulders.

We walked along the quay and stood for a while at the drawbridge. A girl came selling branches of bird cherry blossom, I bought a spray of it and had to wait a long while for my change. He stood to one side, looking at me and frowning slightly.

"Can't you get on without cherry blossom?"

"I can. But it's better with cherry blossom than without."

"I manage always without cherry blossom, and somehow it does not turn out badly," said he, grinning unpleasantly.

Two girls were ahead of us. A whole crowd of students were mauling them, and when they tore themselves away the students burst into fits of laughter, stared after the girls and called out things after them.

"They've put the girls in a bad temper. Went to them without cherry blossom, and the girls took fright," said my companion.

"Why do you dislike cherry blossom so much?" I asked.

"Well, it all ends the same way, cherry blossom or no cherry blossom. . . . Why mince matters?"

"You speak in that way because you have never loved."

"Why is that necessary?"

"Then what is there in a woman for you?"

"Oh, drop this Chinese ceremoniousness and call me thou, don't call me you! As for woman, there is something there for me, and I dare say it amounts to a good deal."

"I shan't call you thou. If everyone uses thou there is no pleasure in it."

We passed some lilac bushes. I stopped a moment to pin the cherry blossom to my blouse. He made a sudden movement, pushed back my head and tried to kiss me.

I pushed him back.

"Don't want to; all right, don't!" said he calmly.

"I don't want it. As you don't love anyone, it's all the same to you what woman you kiss. If instead of me it had been someone else, you'd have wanted to kiss her just the same."

"Quite right. A woman also kisses whom she wants to and does not confine herself to one. We had a little beano lately, and the fiancée of a friend of mine who was there kissed me with as much gusto as she did him. And if it had been someone else near her, she'd have done the same by him. And that couple are marrying for love at the registration office and the rest of it."

I was annoyed in the depths of myself when I heard him speak thus. I had fancied that he was not entirely indifferent to me. How many times had he sought my glance, even when I was in a dense crowd of other students! And why should he spoil this delightful spring evening with licentious and coarse ideas, when one craved tenderness and quiet conversation?

I hated him at that moment. We were passing a bench on which a lady of a kind was sitting. She wore silk stockings and her legs were crossed above the knees. She raised her eyes whenever anyone went by.

My companion stared fixedly at her. And having gone on a few steps he turned round and stared at her again. I felt as if I had been stung.

"Let's sit down here," said he at the next bench. He wanted to sit down there so that he could continue to stare at her.

All at once I felt so upset that I felt I might begin to cry. Fearing lest I should break down, I told him I did not want to be with him any longer and said good-bye.

He was taken aback, and evidently bewildered.

"Why?" he asked. "Don't you like me to be sincere? Would it be better if I dressed my ideas up and lied?"

"I'm sorry you do not possess anything that does not need to be dressed up."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" said he, as if not at first grasping what I meant. "In that case I'll be going also. Good-bye." He held my hand in his for a moment. "Only it's foolish, it's foolish," he repeated, and threw my hand down and strode away towards his home.

I also was taken by surprise. I did not think that he would go away.

I stopped on the corner of the boulevard and looked round. It was one of those May nights when you feel that the life encompassing you is for that night only and never to be repeated. The moon with wisps of cloud about her, stood on high in a warm, cloudy yellow haze. The far-distant sunset tones were lost behind the roofs of many houses and the Kremlin towers. And the infrequent street lights were dimmed by the moonlight.

And there were gay crowds of young men and girls in the brightly lighted square in front of the cathedral, and loving couples on the garden seats under low-branching, close-cropped trees and lilac bushes.

There was a murmur of light conversation and laughter; one saw the glowing ends of cigarettes. Everyone seemed affected, intoxicated by the awakening warmth of the night and eager not to lose a moment of it.

But when such a night strikes no chord in your soul, when you are lonely and miserable and have no companion, you feel very sad, you could not feel worse.

A few moments earlier I had been indifferent whether he was with me or not. But the thought of his staring at that woman on the bench preyed on my mind. I felt a tearful anxiety, and I weakened to such an extent that I wanted nothing else in the world but that he should be with me.

In a word—don't condemn me—I could not bear to be like one who has been expelled from the glad company, thrown out from the choir, this spring festival night.

And without considering what it might mean, I retraced my steps and hurried towards his house.

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There was but one thought in my head; he might have gone out, I might be late, I might remain solitary. And then I reproached myself for breaking away from him so ridiculously without making the slightest effort to bring out the good side of his character.

I reflected that in this I had behaved in just the same way as those who shrug their shoulders at unpleasant conditions, and do nothing to better them. It meant that I wanted to get something better without any expense of energy on my part.

I went under the gateway of the old stone house, and felt the strange contrast of the air of the warm May night out of doors and the cold reek of unheated walls.

There are still many entrances like this in Moscow, with unwashed doors and rags of old advertisements hanging from them, filthy outer stairways, scribbled over and unswept.

He didn't at all expect to see me again. Apparently he was about to sit down to work. There was a slight table that looked like a plasterer's trestles, set up against one of the walls. An electric lamp bulb hung on a cord from the ceiling, but had been pulled over to the table and was fixed there by a nail.

"So, the hero has returned!" he exclaimed. "Evidently thought better of it. So much the better."

He came up to me grinning and took me by the arm. Perhaps he was going to kiss me or stroke me, but he did neither.

"I was sorry we quarrelled and I wanted to put it right," said I.

"What was there to put right? Wait a moment, I'll put a notice on the door that I'm not at home. Otherwise someone may come."

He wrote out the notice, standing at the table, and then went out with it. Alone in the room, I had a look round.

This room of his had the same general character as that staircase. The walls were scrawled with telephone numbers; cigarette ends and scraps of paper littered the unswept floor. There was a tumbled, unmade bed alongside one of the walls, just as in one of our rooms at the hostel; dirty dishes on the window-ledge, empty bottles, butter-paper, egg-shells, cans.

I felt somewhat embarrassed and could not think what I would say to him when he came back. It would not be very wise to be silent, as that might be construed to mean something quite different.

Then it occurred to me to ask myself why he had gone out to fix that notice on the door. What if someone did come?

Suddenly I understood, and at the thought I went dizzy and caught my breath. With a beating heart I went to the window-ledge, having the intention of clearing away the bottles and cigarette boxes to make a place to sit down. I saw that my hand trembled. All the same I did clear the ledge and lay down on it on my stomach.

I had never felt before such an agitated tension of expectation as I did as I lay there listening for what might happen behind my back.

My only regret was that the best minutes of my life and happiness, perhaps of my first day of love, must be accomplished in the midst of the leavings of yesterday's food in this bespattered, dirty room.

That was why, when he came back into the room, I suggested we go out for some fresh air.

An expression of surprise and vexation flitted across his face.

"Why?" he asked. "Haven't you just come from out there?"

Then his voice changed.

"I've fixed it so that nobody is likely to disturb us. Don't talk nonsense. I'm not going to let you out anywhere now," said he hurriedly.

"I don't like being here."

"Ah, beginning all that over again," said he crossly. "What's the matter? Where do you want to go to?"

His speech was choking and rapid, and his hands trembled when he thought to restrain me from going.

My hands also trembled, and my heart beat so violently it was dark before my eyes. A conflict was raging in my mind, the mood of surrender, the feeling that no one would disturb us, and the mood of protest, engendered by his thievish, hurried whispering, his greedy haste and the loss of his calm and self-restraint. He seemed to have only one thing at heart, to succeed before any of his comrades burst in upon him. He showed impatience and irritation at the slightest show of resistance on my part.

We women, even in free love, cannot look too squarely at the actual FACT. For us the fact is always at the end of the chapter, while at the beginning we are charmed by the man himself, his mind, his talents, his soul, his tenderness. We always begin by desiring something other than physical union. When this other desire has not been satisfied and a woman falls a victim to the momentary impulse of her senses, she experiences a disgust with herself instead of a fullness and happiness. She becomes hostile to the man as towards an accomplice in her fall, as towards a gross being who has forced her to have disagreeable and abominable sensations.

The unmade bed, those egg-shells in the window, the dirt, his furtive glances, and the feeling that things were not going the way they should, had already discountenanced me.

"I can't remain!" I exclaimed, almost in tears.

"Now what's the matter? Don't you like the furniture? Not enough poetry in it? But I'm not some baron . . ." he cried with ill-concealed vexation.

I suppose the expression on my face changed at his shouting, for, as if anxious to undo the impression he might have made by these words, he began to calm me in hurried whispers.

"That's all right, dear, stop . . . it's quite true someone might come in."

I ought most certainly to have gone away then. But the fact of being alone with him there enkindled such sheer desire in me as in him. I chose to deceive myself and stayed on in the false expectation that something would intervene . . .

"Wait, I'll make some poetry for you," said he, and turned out the light.

That was better truly, for one did not see the dirty bed nor the bottles nor the cigarette ends on the floor.

I stood at the window with my back to him. He came up behind me and put an arm round my neck while I remained looking out at the window. I could not see the expression of his face, but I was grateful to him for that embrace. I would have liked to stand there for a long, long while.

But his impatience got the better of him. He kept thinking that his comrades might come in. "How long will you stand there?" he asked, leading me away from the window with his arm.

* * * * * * *

When we got up he first of all turned on the light.

"Oh, I don't want any light," I cried in misery and alarm.

He looked at me with astonishment and, shrugging his shoulders, turned the light out again. Then he went back to the bed and began to tidy it.

"I must put my room-mate's bed straight, otherwise Vanya'll guess right away that I've had a lady in the room," said he.

He was fussing around the bed and was on all-fours on the floor, evidently looking for something. I was left alone. Presently he came up to me. Almost against my will I gave a deep sigh, and turned my head round to see him. I was struggling with all my strength to overcome my feelings. He stretched out a hand.

"There," said he, "your hairpins. I crawled and crawled about the floor. Why must you be absolutely without light? You'd better be off now or somebody will be along. I'll see you out by the back way. The front door will be shut now."

We did not say a word to one another, and somehow seemed to be avoiding one another's eyes.

When I got into the street I walked some way mechanically, without a thought. Then suddenly I felt something metallic in my hand and I shuddered, remembering that it was the hairpins which he had put in my palm. I even stood and gazed at them. They were certainly hairpins, nothing more or less.

Still holding them in my hand I staggered home. I still had that spray of crumpled blossom on my blouse, and it hung loose like a rag.

And the same wonderful night held sway over the town. The moon stood high over the masses of buildings, and the little clouds were like curling smoke. The same vague, misty horizon lay far away over the city.

And there was the same aroma of apple blossom, wild cherry and grass . . .

ERSKINE CALDWELL

Crown-Fire

Son of an itinerant Presbyterian minister, Erskine Caldwell was born (1903) in the rural Georgia that he has made famous. An account of his early life reads like the American legend of the rolling stone. Sometime college boy—he was helped through the University of Virginia by the United Daughters of the Confederacy—sometime gun-runner, Caldwell tried the variety of nondescript employments that stud so many American biographies. Finally, he devoted five years to perfecting his writing—in his original way he is a kind of American Flaubert—and eventually one of his short stories, "The Country Full of Swedes," won him recognition. But it was his *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre* that made him a household name. His pictures of rural degeneracy, his macabre humor in conveying the sordid story, were further illuminated by the affirmation that this wretchedness was man-made. *We Are the Living* (1933), from which "Crown-Fire" is taken, showed Caldwell to be far different from the stereotyped Southern local-color writer that some considered him to be; these short stories exhibited a broad, humane sympathy and a *genre* painter's skill with gentle themes.

WHEN I stood up the next time, I saw Irene coming around the bend in the road, swinging her wide-brimmed hat beside her. Her face was flushed and her cheeks were the color of ripe oranges. Over her shoulders her long hair fell in waves, rippling like the mane of her father's sorrel mare pacing along the cowpath in the pasture.

The moment I first saw her, I sat down quickly, trying to hide myself in the tall roadside grass. I was afraid she would see me before she reached the place where I was, and would turn and run across the field before I could speak to her.

Irene was walking slowly, looking backward every few steps at the fires on the eastern ridge. The whole world seemed to have been on fire that day. The air was dense with blue woodsmoke, and, now that evening had come, the flames on the ridge began to color the sky. There had been no rain for almost a month, and the fields and woods were burning night and day. No one tried to stop the fires; only rain could stop the flames from eating over the earth eastward and westward.

I did not know what Irene was going to do when I jumped up and surprised her. I did not wish her to run away from me again; each time I had tried to walk home with her in the evening she had run so fast that I could not keep up with her. But I had to see her and to talk with her. I had wished all that summer to be able to walk along the road with her. Once she had said she did not hate me; but no matter what I said to her, she continued to run away from me, leaving me alone in the road.

Just as she reached the place where I was, I pushed aside the tall grass and sprang to the road beside her. I was certain I could hear the beating of her heart; she was so frightened she did not know what to do.

"Please, Irene," I begged, catching her arm and holding it tightly in my hands, "please let me walk part of the way home with you. Will you? Please let me, Irene."

She was still too frightened to speak or to move. Her heart was beating as madly as that of a captured rabbit.

"Irene," I said, trembling until my voice sounded as though it were hundreds of miles away, "please let me, this one time. Will you?"

Her breath was becoming slower. The rise and fall of her bosom was slower and more even, and the trembling of her lips had stopped.

"Please stop holding me, Sidney," she said.

"Let me walk part of the way home with you. Irene. Please let me, this one time."

"Why do you ask to do that?"

She continued to look at me while I tried to think of something to tell her. I could think of no reason, except that I wished to go with her. I had waited all summer for the time to come when she would let me walk with her; but now when she had asked me why I wished to go with her, I did not know what to say.

"I've got to go with you, Irene," I said, clutching her arm tighter. "I've got to walk home with you."

"I can't let you do that," she said. "You mustn't."

"Why, Irene? Tell me why. Why won't you let me?"

She turned her head and looked back at the red sky over the ridge. There was no sound of shouting men, no cracking of falling pines; there was only the deepening red of the sky at night.

Because I had been waiting all summer, ever since school was out in June, for the time to come when I might walk along the road with her in the evening—because I had lain awake night after night, staring at the blackness, thinking of her—because I could not keep myself from touching her—I released her arm and pressed my hand over her bosom. There was a period of time, an interval so short I knew of no way of measuring its length, when she did not move. Her head was turned towards the fires on the ridge when I clutched her, and she closed her eyes tightly, and, her lips parting, her breath again came quick. Then as suddenly as I had placed my hand over her breasts, she jerked away from me and ran down the road towards home.

"Please, Irene," I begged, running after her; "please come back. I didn't mean to make you run away. Let me go with you."

She was running swiftly, but not so swiftly as I was. I caught her arm again and pulled her back. I could not force her to stop, and we walked along the road while I held her.

"I'm going to tell your father, Sidney," she said. "You just wait and see if I don't. I'm going to tell him what you did to me. You just wait and see if I don't tell your father."

I did not know what to say. I did not mind so much the whipping he would give me as I did my father's knowledge of what I had done to her. I did not know what to do. I was afraid to release her arm, and I was afraid to continue holding her.

"I'm going to tell your father on you, Sidney," she kept on saying. "You just wait and see if I don't. I'm going to tell him what you did to me in the road."

When we reached the churchyard where the path was that made a short cut to Irene's house, we both stopped. It had become darker, and the reflection of the fires against the sky was so bright I could even see the tears in Irene's eyes when she turned her head towards me. Both of us stood in the churchyard trembling, and looking at the red sky and at each other.

"Why did you do that, Sidney?" she asked.

"When I went to the road to wait for you, Irene, I didn't think of doing anything like that. I only wished to see you and walk home with you. But—when I caught you—I couldn't keep from touching you. I had to. I just had to put my hand on you somewhere."

The fires on the ridge drew her gaze towards them once more. She could not keep from looking at the smoke and flame and at the dull red glow overhead.

Suddenly she turned and looked directly at me.

"Sidney, if you don't let me go," she said, "I'll scream. I'll scream until everybody hears me."

At any other time I would have put my hand over her mouth; this time I released her arm and placed my hands over her breasts, holding her more desperately than I had the first time. She did not move. She stood still, looking backward at the fires on the ridge. The night was almost light as day by that time. The shadows were long and gray, and the air was filled with blue woodsmoke. We stood in the churchyard path, waiting.

Wind on the ridge had risen, and the flames were leaping higher into the night. While we watched them, we could see the flames climbing into the tree-tops and burning the pine needles. A little later, the fire in the underbrush and in the grass had almost died out; but in the tops of the pines it burned faster and brighter than ever.

"It's a crown-fire now," Irene said. "Look—the pine tops are burning!"

The sight we saw made us tremble. We were standing close to each other, holding each other. Irene's face was more flushed than ever, and her bosom rose and fell faster than it had in the road when I sprang at her from the tall grass.

"A crown-fire can't be stopped until it burns itself out," she said. "I'm afraid of crown-fires."

She placed her hands over my hands and pressed them tightly against her. Then she leaned against me, and I could feel the soft warmth of her body touching mine. Her heart beat so madly that I could feel with my hands its throb through her body, and her breath came so quickly that, even though I held her firmly, her breasts trembled as her lips were doing.

I did not know for how long a time I had held my face against the soft warmth of her throat when she suddenly raised my head and kissed my lips and tore herself out of my arms. It was much later though, because the crown-fire had burned off into the distance, almost out of sight.

"I've got to go home now, Sidney," she said; "if I don't go now, they'll be coming after me."

I ran after her, and stopped. We were then on the other side of the churchyard, at the end of the path. Through the trees I could see the lights of her house.

"Will you let me walk home with you tomorrow evening, Irene, and every evening?" I asked.

She stopped a moment and looked back at me. I waited, shaking all over, to hear her reply. I was afraid that she would say she would not allow me to come with her again.

While I waited, clutching at a tree beside me, she looked off into the distance towards the ridge where the fire had been. There was no light in the sky then, and the air was clearing of woodsmoke. I went a step nearer, gripping the rough bark of the pine tree between my fingers.

"Will you, Irene?"

Without a word, she turned and ran through the grove towards the lights in her home. After she had gone, I stood beside the tree listening. I had hoped so much that she would promise to let me come with her again the next evening, and every evening after that, that I could not believe she had gone away without an answer.

Later I walked back through the dark churchyard, out of the path, and up the road past the tall grass where I had lain that afternoon. There was no longer a light in the sky over the ridge. The crown-fire had burned itself out at the edge of the cleared field. Until there was again fire on the ridge, perhaps not again until the next summer, I knew she would run away from me each time I tried to stop her. Every day when I wished to see her, I should have to hide in the tall roadside grass and look at her while she passed. I knew I could never again catch her as I had done that evening, because ever after she would be on guard against me, and if I should spring from the tall grass and succeed in catching her, she would surely tell my father of what I had done to her.

Long before I reached home I had made up my mind to catch her again some day and to hold her as I had done for nearly an hour that night. I knew I should never again be happy until I held her again and could feel her soft warm lips kiss mine; I should never again be happy until she pressed my hands against her to hold tighter the trembling of her breasts. Some day, that year or the years following, there would again be a crown-fire on the ridge. New pines would spring up to take the places of the burned ones, and some one would drop lighted matches in the dry underbrush.

JOSEPH DELTEIL

Don Juan

DELTEIL, born in France (1895), is the spoiled boy of Continental literature. Arrogant, clever, paradoxical, master of tumultuous rhetoric, reveling in strained metaphors, he is sometimes crude and often psychologically careless; yet he must be regarded as a wholesome corrective to pedantry. He masters the sources of his subject with cold scholarship, then manipulates this material to shock his readers and to reverse the judgment of the age. He early embraced Dadaism, the movement that ridiculed our culture and glorified the use of language without exact correspondence to external facts and without acceptance of traditional logic or psychology. However, with his novel *On the River Amour* he finally became bored with his own cleverness. He proceeded to write a provocative life of Joan of Arc, which was crowned by a feminine jury. In 1930 he produced a highly original portrait of Don Juan. This *Don Juan* is an adolescent whose love-life reflects the luxuriant *éclat* of Spain at its zenith—a crusader, adventurer, fanatic plunderer, he is repentant and vicious according to the winds of fortune. This novel pictures love as the reflection of a national tradition on the ungovernable needs of a young man; as such, it is pertinent to our time.

THIS pious mystic child, so candid and so given to excesses, was set on fire by the first embrace. He set sail for Woman as others for Florida . . . or for Jerusalem. A curious epoch it was, indeed, the Spanish sixteenth century: all toil and leaven, all rife with passions and appetites, all devastated by fever and famine. A kind of hunger had aroused the whole Peninsula. Upon the rugged plateaux of Castille and Estramadura, one breathed an air of caravels, of spices, and gold. The merest village urchin, man-at-arms, or monk dreamed of the strange marvels, the adventures, the conquests in unknown lands across the seas, in the heart of whose angelic races one might set up the standard of the Cross. It was then that the expression: The Indies, took on its paradisical sense. The country knew naught but pearl-drunk captains, grass-admirals, nurseries of conquistadors. Indeed, it was the *conquistadorial* age, and what was Don Juan if not the conquistador of the Flesh? . . . Moreover, a universal movement, a Catholic urge: a craving for knowledge with Erasmus, Rabelais, da Vinci; a craving for conquest with Cortez, Pizarro, Don Juan of Austria; a craving for faith with Savonarola, with Saint Therese; and a craving for the flesh with Don Juan!

But, let us make no mistake. Such transports, such passions, such feasts of energy betokened a spirit of renewal and youth, proclaimed a wave of sanctity. Don Quixote—the world's greatest idealist—is he so far removed? And the Cid? Don Juan bridges the gap between Knighthood and the age of Conquistadors.

To begin with, he possessed the Knight's blind faith, and his worship of the Lady (the Lady, in this case, divided in herself and scattered in a thousand and three petals), ever over hill and dale in quest of gallant deeds (an orphan to defend or a wench to deflower), in one word, a champion. The Conquistador's taste for the immediate, the temporal, and for physical possession was his, for the Conquistador it was who had turned an abstraction into Peru, who had made a eunuch of the Unicorn, and who gave body and form to the Knight's ideal. If the prey varied, the appetite at least was always the same. Christopher Columbus, Pizarro, Don Juan were all fulfilling some unknown mission of the heart. What was it that took them to the Antipodes? In quest of some virgin Land, or bearing Jesus to the savages; "discovering" Love, perhaps. . . . So many Crusades, waged by so many Saints. . . .

The first principle of Holiness, it seems to me, is ardour (*ardere,* to burn). Its born enemies and its positive impediments are dispersion, laxity, indolence, and tepidity—nor must these be confused with contemplation which, on the contrary, is action in the extreme, and the bow drawn taut to the uttermost. "The great illness of the soul is cold," Clemenceau has said magnificently. The saint is he who strips off all the ephemeral, the fortuitous, the temporal and comes to grips with the ideal. The saint is the archer who aims at God.

The motto of saints, and the motto of Don Juan was: "Passionately."

And let no one read therein any suspicious mixture or any simony! The ties of the flesh and the spirit are delicate and profound, lawful and blessed. There is a bridge on high uniting the senses and God: Mysticism. The "bridge of God."

At the beginning, there was Faith. Faith, a specifically Spanish trait, and one which nourishes all Spain's drama. "Sin is but the shadow of doubt." And, by the same token, Don Juan, one of the most universal of heroes, was at the same time a true hero of that soil. Spanish Catholic, and Christian rather than Catholic, for Catholicism is to Christianity what marriage is to love. Faith in Love, faith in the Virgin, faith in God (even though at times it be reversed, for there is also faith *against* God)—such was the frame-work of his being.

Faith in Love. He had always imagined Love exalted, solemn, and filled with majesty—with a halo hovering above it. And in this was he, once again, typically the Spaniard, with none of the Gaul about him, and still less of the Greek. With the rich and extreme nature that was his, he could never conceive of anything that was not intrinsic and unique. Yes, first and foremost, Don Juan was a man who *believed* in love. Ah, truly, not in that natural, daily, lawful, and—out with it!—banal affair which any purse can afford, and which causes raw virgin louts to snicker, and old men to shake a leg; but in strange, marvellous, unbelievable Love! That millions of men, males, females, half-females, and quarter-males indulged in it, or rather meddled in it, belittled and debased it, faugh, fy! That the sorriest fool had a paw in it; or that invalids and paralytics shamelessly floundered in it; that indiscriminately on grass or pallet, or even on lowly sofa, functionaries and cart-drivers beguiled their Sundays with it, faugh, faugh, fy, fy! That, coming straight from the factory or stable, with hands still reeking of cart-grease, or mouths degraded by wine, helots and laymen gallivanted their puny tuppenny derms and their lop-sided anatomies about in it —oh, scandalous! But Don Juan knew, and professed, and was, moreover, the living example that love reigns *in excelsis;* that it is as rare as the flower of the aloes, legendary as the Queen of Sheba, mysterious as the unicorn, voracious as an ogre, monstrous! And that it is astounding, magical, a prodigy, unlawful perhaps, and vaguely criminal, rape or loot, a swindling of God, in some measure, as if one appropriated some of His Heaven; unutterable, indomitable, and the prerogative of the hero; that it is the Great Act, a true Knighthood with ordeals and investiture, and that only those initiated to the thirty-third degree have a right to it; furthermore, that it is mystical, sacerdotal—one must have the calling—that it is, in short, the one authentic Sacrifice. Don Juan was, undoubtedly, the first man who exalted physical love to the heights of a Sacrament (I say Love, and not Marriage). If, for centuries and centuries, he has so bewitched women with his magic, it is because, in their eyes, Don Juan is the Priest of Love.

"Sexual obsession!" say those pitiable professors who have deleted the poem of the flesh to a monthly version of their marital duty, and who await a blue moon to rise before putting their better halves with child. Poor fellows! Born frigid, how could they for a moment visualize the flowering of love? And what a singular exhaustion of the being is that benediction from heaven on our entrails! Our limbs are winged, and the breath of giants fills our lungs. The whole firmament descends into our hearts, with zephyrs, birds, and lilies even. Leaving the earth, we rise for a moment flush with the sky, in the presence of the angels. Easter! Halleluiah!

The Crusade of Don Juan began, like many another, by the way, by many an adventure and many a feat, all profane; the mad flowers of sin before the lily of Salvation. . . . Saint Augustine, once upon a time . . .

When he had attained his sixteenth year, his father sent him to Seville. This boy, still somewhat callow, this son of a country-squire, was fascinated yet nauseated by the effeminate city. He studied at the University. Studies, naturally not confined to the class-room: but carousels, jamborees, and the rest of it. But now Don Juan could never understand the word "amusement." Don Juan had never set foot in a w—— house. Debauchery, that game of skittles, left him cold, and in the fiercest heat of the orgy, he kept his arrogant temper and his sombre heart. He waited. . . .

Now, this spring, Therese, the daughter of the Commander happened to be in Seville. Don Juan met her by chance. What a celebration! Saint Therese and Don Juan: the whole of Spain!

The little girl had not out-grown the days of Mañara, and their games and sighs. She played the coquette and the prude, she played the doll. And Don Juan, encouraged by a smile or an impetuous glance, boldly took liberties with her. She became frightened, endeavouring to comprehend this new scale of things. Vaguely sensing she knew not what bestial emotion. *Noli me tangere*. . . .

His audacity was unbelievable. He reminded her of the childish ceremonial of their marriage, and with maddening persistence and kisses on her naked skin, called her "my wife," and "my darling." Oh, the denuding fixity of that eye, the eloquence of those sharp fingers! What a little thing is a little girl!

Until, one day, when he had become too intimate in his caresses, she took flight and refused to see him again.

As if he cared about that! He passed every day in front of her window, on horseback, whistling, and hectoring, and flinging small gravel against the panes. And she would remain motionless behind the window, quivering with tenderness, as he saluted her with great sweeps of his peacock-feathered hat. What a brutal, what a divine boy! A thousand sweet memories of childhood flooded her mind, effacing his crass actions of today.

One morning, as he passed, Don Juan tossed her a piece of folded paper through the open window.

She hesitated, asked counsel of heaven, and, all covered with blushes, read the *billet-doux.*

For a week I have ceased to live. At twelve o'clock tonight, I shall climb into your room by the balcony window. I want to throw myself at your feet, and show you the hurt in my heart.

JUAN.

Beneath the moon, Seville effuses in arabesques her odour of carnation. Indeed, from the hair of her women to the spiral of her streets, the arabesque is her most fitting symbol. Even the houses seem to rise in spiral rows, and Seville, herself, seems a dancer in stone. These syllables: Guadalquivir—they are as beautiful as any orchestra. The sky is resonant there, and on it the spires beat the drum of God. Balconies, arcades, parapets, bridges, all in movement, all tapering. A lunar mosaic of grated windows, dormers, projecting perrons. Interlacings of the stairways, intertwinings of the pink arcades, interweavings of the running fountains, intertwistings, arabesques. . . .

And the ladder which was tossed up without warning by some invisible and enchanted hand, and caught fast by its two grapples on Therese's balcony, what was it but another arabesque? This ladder of silk was a ladder of good stout rope, in truth! And at the sound of it, Therese quaked in the obscurity of her bed. How many times between nine and midnight had she read and reread in the meagre glow of the oil lamp, that romantic epistle of four sweet lines? She had blown out the light, and tossed aside the scrawl. And there she lay, motionless, palpitating, at the mercy of the dark. Then, from below, in the alleyway all mosaiced with moon, sounded the first strains of the serenade. As if it too were a ladder, note by note climbing the wall. To take Therese by storm! All the mysticism, all the precious realism of Spain was in this song:

Hark to the bird, oh, lovely one, whose food is hearts
And drink is wine of love!
Hark to his beak at the door of thy voluptuousness,
Heed his soft throat lifted for your caress!
The aphrodisiac perfume of the hyacinth is his,
And the whole scale of Halleluiahs he sings!

Naught could be heard in the night but these words, strung singly, like a necklace of oranges. As yet no human trace in this phenomenon of music. It might all have been taken for some fairy masque, some paradisical play of things, had it not been for those two brass hooks gleaming behind the pane. The poor girl watched them with terrifying sensibility. No sign, not a single one of those loud sounds which, once localized, charms peril away. Alert of eye, Therese left her bed, and stealthily, one hand draping her yellow shift about her knees, went as far as the window. What should she do? What should she do? Frightfully alone, and orphaned she felt, and frightfully ignorant, above all. Utterly bewildered, in the most unheard of circumstances. Heaven should have prompted her; the genius of virginity, though it be the most insignificant of guardian angels, should have revealed to her, point by point, a whole system of defence: "Light the light!—Call your father!—Push a wardrobe in front of the window!" And so on. All this she would have done with a marvellous docility. . . . Why was it that instinct thus abandoned her? There she was, at her wits' ends, frantic, at the mercy of . . .

At this moment, some sort of manœuvre agitated the ladder, as if a body had swung upon it. And seized with panic, or impelled by some sublime or imbecile impulse of curiosity in the desperation of the final moment, she madly flung open the window, and with all the strength of her dismayed voice she gave vent in one word, one poor, terribly brief word, one feeble, impotent word, to all the obscure denial, all the latent refusal which filled her soul:

"No! . . . No! . . . No! . . ."

"Therese," said the shadow—and in a voice strangely modulated, a voice as serpentine as a kiss-curl—"Therese, I have wept too much, I have been miserable too long. I have counted my heart beats one by one for so long a time. If you knew how the thought of you overwhelms me in solitude, if you knew how my mouth waters at the sound of your name! . . ."

And while he delivered his little speech, the rascal was climbing—ohé! ohé!—up the poor ladder that groaned and protested beneath his twistings and his weight. Rung by rung, his voice came nearer and warmer and more fleshly, until it seemed to stroke Therese with an almost physical caress. She felt herself captive in the toils of his voice, and her heart beat but dimly, when suddenly Don Juan laid hold of her arm. . . .

She retreated in fright, and closing her eyes—a gesture which is, mysteriously, equivalent to some sort of flight—she cried out:

"Don't touch me! Don't touch me!"

With a single bound he might have scaled the balustrade, overcome the poignant girl before she had recovered from the shock, and so forestalled any outcry. But why was it that he suddenly released the hold he had upon his dream and dived back into the darkness at the foot of the ladder. An accumulation of old plaster rolled tragically down the wall. . . . Cat and mouse? The instinct of the voluptuary who knows that pleasure is enhanced and increased by the thwarting of it? Or because the cry of a virgin is like the edge of a sword? . . .

There he crouched, dreaming, concealed in his web of cord. Like some solemn insect brooding in the ivy and wistaria tapestry upon the wall. A soft murmur rustled through the fragrant foliage. Something of the aphrodisiac, of the fatal, the fabulous resided in the bluish rays of the moon. And below, the man with the guitar sang:

> The orange trees, beloved, are ripe with thy perfume.
> The firmament vintages thy breasts to make of them stars
>   and moons.
> Arise, arise, from the curtain of thy hair that is paling,
> For the rose of love has risen and blooms in the zenith.

. . . He was dreaming, when suddenly:

"Well, Therese," he said. "Do with me as you think I merit. Now I can die. If you but knew, Therese, how shamelessly I have enjoyed you this last week—kissing your mouth in the depths of shells, shaping your heart in the resin of the pine, inscribing your breast between two clouds, finding your smile in a flower, intoxicating myself with all these images, gorging my heart with them! Not a blade of grass, not an olive in which I did not perceive one of your attributes, your hair, your colouring, the thousand secrets of your body, and I feasted on them in the noon-hour of my flesh. How could I ever renounce so marvellous a possession? Ah, better death! A little fall on the stones, and a wee little break of the back, and there I would be, Therese!"

And, in a curiously honeyed voice, a voice so veined with raillery that the young girl was overwhelmed, he besought her charity:

"Come, now, a little gesture, please, Therese! Just a little jerk at those hooks and I will plunge into oblivion, into the delicious oblivion of your cruelty. There now, there, the slightest touch of your little finger! . . ."

She could distinguish the terrible lividness of his countenance as it shone through the moonlit vine. And, abruptly flinging aside all this polished rhetoric, this false irony more terrible in such a place and at such a moment than the truest anguish, he cried out in a horrible gruff voice:

"Go ahead, go ahead, then!" And terrifyingly rolling his r's, he roared: "Caraï, caraï! You are so beautiful, I cannot live! Throw off that bit of hook! Unhook it, let me fall, come along!"

This wave of bestial, or rather devilish brutality, this raucity, this oath—for an oath is like an eruption and cleanses one—startled her into action. To her eyes, the scene now shed its poetry, as a flower its petals. She passed from the plane of romance to the lowly plane of calamity. She touched the rope, made fast the grapples, at the mercy of that palingenesis of emotions in which she could distinguish naught but chaos, expecting she knew not what. . . .

"Juan, Juan," she murmured, "you are mad!"

But Juan was under the sway of a grandiose rage, a rage intensified by that singular spirit of recklessness and display which possesses men when they wax passionate; perhaps, too, an unwitting prey to the atmosphere of death—that mirror-for-larks.[1] With great springs, he again climbed up to the balustrade, and his fiendish hands had already got one of the two grapples loose. . . . With this, the whole ladder swayed and rocked in the void like a hangman's rope. Already . . . But Therese, lucid now, and with the desperate strength of virgins, flung the entire weight of her body upon the ladder.

There they were, girl in shift and man in leather, under the moon which stippled, and lozenged, and enwreathed them with shadows: shadows of tiles, shadows of arches, shadows of turrets. There they were, merged in a desperate struggle, he biting her hands so that she release her grip, and she with muscles contracting under his teeth, both fighting furiously, he for suicide, she for salvation. Leaning closely over him and clinging to the hooks, she sought to calm his violence, to charm him with tender intonations; prudence and modesty flung to the four winds, she murmured softly in his ear, his neck, against his lips, she enfolded him in words, intimate words that sprang from her very depths; coaxing, impassioned words that would have amazed her at any other time, but all things are rendered incomparably lawful and chaste in the time of catastrophe. She mollified him with her breath, embraced his wild locks all odorous of crushed ivy leaves and manly sweat, with a row of tears which did not fall, clinging to her lashes.

Then her shift caught upon some gablet of the balcony and tore with a dry crepitating sound which seemed never to end and which terrified the two of them. For a moment they remained motionless, and Don Juan's gaze fell upon her. The long slim knee of a woman was apparent in the tear, a marvellous sight of moon-lit skin to which he suddenly pressed his desperate lips. All was over. The male was himself again in flesh and spirit. He scaled the balcony and drew Therese into the yawning chamber. . . .

Below, the singer sang:

> The way of Saint James is less soft than thy skin.
> The fruit of thy orchard is sun in my mouth.

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[1] *Translator's Note: An instrument mounted on a pivot and studded with little pieces of looking-glass, the brilliance of which attracts larks and other small birds.*

From looking on thee have my senses run wild.
And those high limbs, soaring higher, the pillars of heaven!

Had all this racket, and this interminable serenade, given the alarm in the Palace? And now, moreover, the din continued unabated in the obscurity of the room. Therese had come to her senses, and in the gloom of night could be heard her moaning accents: "No! No!" Suddenly, she gave a cry of terror. . . .

The door opened, and the Commander of Ulloa appeared upon the threshold. With his red, black polka-dotted dressing-gown, his green slippers, his naked sword in one hand and a torch in the other, he was a comic sight, tragi-comical, and, at the same time, strangely solemn. Yellowish and baleful rays were shed by the torch throughout the maiden-chamber. For an instant, as if turned to stone, the two young protagonists stood there, stock-still: Therese, colourless in her isabel shift, standing, half-bowed, with one hand resting on the bed's head; and Juan, the colour of ochre and brick, all dishevelled, his eye dull and a sort of froth upon his mouth. But straightway he regained his composure and began to strut.

"My word, if here isn't a ghost in his nightshirt!" he said, and burst into a loud guffaw.

The Commander took three steps in silence. He held out the torch to Therese.

"You, hold the light," he said.

And to Don Juan:

"And you, draw your sword!"

Don Juan was jubilant. The idea of crossing swords with a Commander in night attire seemed to him too excruciatingly funny. He adjusted his doublet mechanically, and, with little fillips, polished his boots.

"But get dressed, at least," he jested.

And the other responded, dryly:

"En garde!"

And, comic to the point of absurdity, he wrapped all the polka-dots of his dressing-gown over his left arm, by this gesture revealing a triangle of hirsute legs, and knees like Adam's apples. Don Juan was literally convulsed with laughter—with perhaps some sexual effluvium mingled with his hilarity. He approached the Commander, and, fingering the polka-dotted wrapper, he jeered:

"Real Chinese silk! How delightful for the skin! It's as good as having a woman next to you, eh, old fellow! . . ."

"Coward! Coward!" cried the old man, placing his blade between himself and the youth. *"En garde!"*

With sword held high, he drove back Don Juan, and with such vigour that he pricked his wrist. The few drops of blood drawn disturbed Don Juan, for the symbol of blood aroused in him an entire ancient sensitivity. Blood has its own law, living within us a life in some way autonomous, with its mysterious system of reflexes and associations. At times, man is but the bondsman of his blood. Don Juan drew his sword.

"Well, then, since you wish to die! . . ."

They were already crossing steel, while Therese, trembling, and torch in hand, illuminated the sinister operation. At each clash of the swords, she trembled even more violently, and the wavering candle-flames shed a zig-zag light upon the two protagonists. They were grave now, and behind their subterfuge of feints and parries, and the organic mutterings which greeted and fed each thrust, their imperious ferocity could be divined. No longer a question of a grotesque shirt-tail, nor of pulling the beard of old age. Here were two incompatible poles of life, each one excluding the other. So that this nocturnal combat with its background and commentary, as it were, of shadows assumed the appearance and value of a duel of principles, a duel, perhaps, between Good and Evil. And this girl—pale as victim and Sacred Host, with her high torch hovering over and playing its part, seemed to be, monstrously, both judge and stake. . . .

It all happened in a trice. The Commander sank down with a long rattling in his throat. . . . Don Juan made for the window and strode across the balcony. Down the rope ladder he went in haste, sweating, dishevelled, with his bare sword hanging and drops of blood dripping from it one by one onto the cobbles mosaiced with moon. . . .

. . . The way of Saint James is less soft than thy skin.
The fruit of thy orchard is sun in my mouth. . . .

BOOK II: *Pursuit*

NOTE ON ALDOUS HUXLEY'S

"ANTIC HAY"

Gumbril, son of a London manufacturer of Gumbril's Patent Small Clothes, is a university man. He has affairs with girls (one of them, Rosie, is referred to) and he has many articulate friends, among them Mercaptan. Gumbril meets Emily just before our selection begins.

Emily had been married at seventeen to a much older man, a friend of her father who had just died. She had had no idea of the physical aspects of marriage; and her exasperated husband treated her brutally. They separated, she still a virgin. For Gumbril, this background experience of Emily's is a challenge. He attempts to create those settings—in nature, walks, sophisticated talk, classic music, the world of sensation, and verbal reference—that will make physical love natural for her.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Antic Hay

Aldous Huxley, descendant of the evolutionist T. H. Huxley, holds to little of the certitude of his grandfather. Clever and sensitive, he has seen science fail to make humanity wiser and better, and from this he has drawn lessons of disenchantment. Like most of the "sad young men," he saw World War I as a spiritual swindle and capitalism as a mess. He regards socialism's objective as illusory and meliorism as inadequate. Lately he has veered into a mystic path, the usual outlet for the skeptical, brilliant artist incapable of rationalist syntheses. *Antic Hay* (1923), published when Huxley was twenty-nine, dissolves all the values of love, its romance, canonical sentiment, aims, and ideals of beauty. It is a most devastating assault, for where a Strindberg storms and hates, Huxley records and, in a sophisticated manner, seemingly yawns. Huxley began his literary career with a strange story of a bisexual soul, Richard Greenhow, in *Limbo;* strayed into elaborate intellectual commentaries and rococo poetry; then sketched Utopias; and is today limited in production by his afflicted sight.

THE pale, high, clot-polled trees of the English spring; the dark, symmetrical pine trees, islanded here and there on the lawns, each with its own separate profile against the sky and its own shadow, impenetrably dark or freckled with moving lights, on the grass at its feet.

They walked on in silence. Gumbril took off his hat, breathed the soft air that smelt of the greenness of the garden.

"There are quiet places also in the mind," he said, meditatively. "But we build bandstands and factories on them. Deliberately—to put a stop to the quietness. We don't like the quietness. All the thoughts, all the preoccupations in my head—round and round, continually." He made a circular motion with his hand. "And the jazz bands, the music hall songs, the boys shouting the news. What's it for, what's it all for? To put an end to the quiet, to break it up and disperse it, to pretend at any cost it isn't there. Ah, but it is, it is there, in spite of everything, at the back of everything. Lying awake at night, sometimes—not restlessly, but serenely, waiting for sleep—the quiet re-establishes itself, piece by piece; all the broken bits, all the fragments of it we've been so busily dispersing all day long. It re-establishes itself, an inward quiet, like this outward quiet of grass and trees. It fills one, it grows—a crystal quiet, a growing expanding crystal. It grows, it becomes more perfect; it is beautiful and terrifying, yes, terrifying, as well as beautiful. For one's alone in the crystal and there's no support from outside, there's nothing external and important, nothing external and trivial to pull oneself up by or to stand on, superiorly, contemptuously, so that one can look down. There's nothing to laugh at or feel enthusiastic about. But the quiet grows and grows. Beautifully and unbearably. And at last you are conscious of something approaching; it is almost a faint sound of footsteps. Something inexpressibly lovely and wonderful advances through the crystal, nearer, nearer. And, oh, inexpressibly terrifying. For if it were to touch you, if it were to seize and engulf you, you'd die; all the regular, habitual, daily part of you would die. There would be an end of bandstands and whizzing factories, and one would have to begin living arduously in the quiet, arduously in some strange unheard-of manner. Nearer, nearer come the steps; but one can't face the advancing thing. One daren't. It's too terrifying, it's too painful to die. Quickly, before it is too late, start the factory wheels, bang the drum, blow up the saxophone. Think of the women you'd like to sleep with, the schemes for making money, the gossip about your friends, the last outrage of the politicians. Anything for a diversion. Break the silence, smash the crystal to pieces. There, it lies in bits; it is easily broken, hard to build up and easy to break. And the steps? Ah, those have taken themselves off, double quick. Double quick, they were gone at the first flawing of the crystal. And by this time the lovely and terrifying thing is three infinities away, at least. And you lie tranquilly on your bed, thinking of what you'd do if you had ten thousand pounds and of all the fornications you'll never commit." He thought of Rosie's pink underclothes.

"You make things very complicated," she said, after a silence.

Gumbril spread out his great-coat on a green bank and they sat down. Leaning back, his hands under his head, he watched her sitting there beside him. She had taken off her hat; there was a stir of wind in those childish curls and at the nape, at the temples, where the hair had sleaved out thin and fine, the sunlight made little misty haloes of gold. Her hands clasped round her knees, she sat quite still, looking out across the green expanses, at the trees, at the white clouds on the horizon. There was quiet in her mind, he thought. She was native to that crystal world; for her, the steps came comfortingly through the silence and the lovely thing brought with it no terrors. It was all so easy for her and simple.

Ah, so simple, so simple; like the Hire Purchase System on which Rosie had bought her pink bed. And how simple it was, too, to puddle clear waters and unpetal every flower—every flower, by God! one ever passed in a governess cart at the heels of a barrel-bellied pony. How simple to spit on the floors of churches. *Si prega di non sputare.* Simple to kick one's legs and enjoy oneself—dutifully—in pink underclothing. Perfectly simple.

"It's like the Arietta, don't you think?" said Emily suddenly, "the Arietta of Op. III." And she hummed the first bars of the air. "Don't you feel it's like that?"

"What's like that?"

"Everything," said Emily. "To-day, I mean. You and me. These gardens—" And she went on humming.

Gumbril shook his head. "Too simple for me," he said.

Emily laughed. "Ah, but then think how impossible it gets a little further on." She agitated her fingers wildly, as though she were trying to play the impossible passages. "It begins easily for the sake of poor imbeciles like me; but it goes on, it goes on, more and more fully and subtly and abstrusely and embracingly. But it's still the same movement."

The shadows stretched further and further across the lawns and as the sun declined, the level light picked out among the grasses innumerable stipplings of shadow; and in the paths, that had seemed under the more perpendicular rays as level as a table, a thousand little shadowy depressions and sun-touched mountains were now apparent. Gumbril looked at his watch.

"Good Lord," he said, "we must fly." He jumped up. "Quick, quick."

"But why?"

"We shall be late." He wouldn't tell her for what. "Wait and see," was all that Emily could get out of him by her questioning. They hurried out of the gardens and in spite of her protests, he insisted on taking a taxi into town. "I have such a lot of unearned increment to get rid of," he explained. The Patent Small Clothes seemed at the moment remoter than the farthest stars.

In spite of the taxi, in spite of the gobbled dinner, they were late. The concert had begun.

"Never mind," said Gumbril. "We shall get in in time for the minuetto. It's then that the fun really begins."

"Sour grapes," said Emily, putting her ear to the door. "It sounds to me simply too lovely."

They stood outside, like beggars waiting abjectly at the doors of a banqueting hall, stood and listened to the snatches of music that came out tantalisingly from within. A rattle of clapping announced at last that the first movement was over; the doors were thrown open. Hungrily they rushed in. The Sclopis Quartet and a subsidiary viola were bowing from the platform. There was a chirrup of tuning, then preliminary silence. Sclopis nodded and moved his bow. The minuetto of Mozart's G minor Quintet broke out, phrase after phrase, short and decisive, with every now and then a violent sforzando chord, startling in its harsh and sudden emphasis.

Minuetto—all civilisation, Mr. Mercaptan would have said, was implied in the delicious word, the delicate pretty thing. Ladies and precious gentlemen, fresh from the wit and gallantry of Crébillon-haunted sofas, stepping gracefully to a pattern of airy notes. To this passion of one who cries out, to this obscure and angry argument with fate how would they, Gumbril wondered, how would they have tripped it?

How pure the passion, how unaffected, clear and without clot or pretension the unhappiness of that slow movement which followed! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Pure and unsullied; pure and unmixed, unadulterated. "Not passionate, thank God; only sensual and sentimental." In the name of earwig. Amen. Pure, pure. Worshippers have tried to rape the statues of the gods; the statuaries who made the images were generally to blame. And how deliciously too, an artist can suffer! and, in the face of the whole Albert Hall, with what an effective gesture and grimace! But blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The instruments come together and part again. Long silver threads hang aerially over a murmur of waters; in the midst of muffled sobbing, a cry. The fountains blow their architecture of slender pillars and from basin to basin the waters fall; from basin to basin, and every fall makes somehow possible a higher leaping of the jet, and at the last fall the mounting column springs up into the sunlight and from water the music has modulated up into a rainbow. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; they shall make God visible, too, to other eyes.

Blood beats in the ears. Beat, beat, beat. A slow drum in the darkness, beating in the ears of one who lies wakeful with fever, with the sickness of too much misery. It beats unceasingly, in the ears, in the mind itself. Body and mind are indivisible and in the spirit blood painfully throbs. Sad thoughts droop through the mind. A small pure light comes swaying down through the darkness, comes to rest, resigning itself to the obscurity of its misfortune. There is resignation, but blood still beats in the ears. Blood still painfully beats, though the mind has acquiesced. And then, suddenly, the mind exerts itself, throws off the fever of too much suffering and, laughing, commands the body to dance. The introduction to the last movement comes to its suspended, throbbing close. There is an instant of expectation and then, with a series of mounting trochees and a downward hurrying, step after tiny step, in triple time, the dance begins. Irrelevant, irreverent, out of key with all that has gone before. But man's greatest strength lies in his capacity for irrelevance. In the midst of pestilences, wars and famines, he builds cathedrals; and a slave, he can think the irrelevant and unsuitable thoughts of a free man. The spirit is slave to fever and beating blood, at the mercy of an obscure and tyrannous misfortune. But irrelevantly, it elects to dance in triple measure—a mounting skip, a patter of descending feet.

The G minor Quintet is at an end; the applause rattles out loudly. Enthusiasts stand up and cry bravo. And the five men on the platform rise and bow their acknowledgments. Great Sclopis himself receives his share of the plaudits with a weary condescension; weary are his poached eyes, weary his disillusioned smile. It is only his due, he knows; but he has had so much clapping, so many lovely women. He has a Roman nose, a colossal brow and though the tawny musical mane does much to conceal the fact, no back to his head. Garofalo, the second fiddle, is black, beady eyed and pot-bellied. The convex reflections of the electroliers slide back and forth over his polished bald head, as he bends, again, again, in little military salutes. Peperkoek, two metres high, bows with a sinuous politeness. His face, his hair are all of the same greyish buff colour; he does not smile, his appearance is monolithic and grim. Not so exuberant Knoedler, who sweats and smiles and embraces his 'cello and lays his hand to his heart and bows almost to the ground as though all this hullaballoo were directed only at him. As for poor little Mr. Jenkins, the subsidiary viola, he has slid away, into the background and, feeling that this is really the Sclopis's show and that he, a mere intruder, has no right to any of these demonstrations, he hardly bows at all, but only smiles, vaguely and nervously, and from time to time makes a little spasmodic twitch to show that he isn't really ungrateful or haughty, as you might think, but that he feels in the circumstances—the position is a little embarrassing—it is hard to explain. . . .

"Strange," said Gumbril, "to think that those ridiculous creatures could have produced what we've just been hearing."

The poached eye of Sclopis lighted on Emily, flushed and ardently applauding. He gave her, all to herself, a weary smile. He would have a letter, he guessed, to-morrow morning signed "Your little Admirer in the Third Row." She looked a choice little piece. He smiled again to encourage her. Emily, alas, had not even noticed. She was applauding the music.

"Did you enjoy it?" he asked, as they stepped out into a deserted Bond Street.

"Did I? . . ." Emily laughed expressively. "No, I didn't enjoy," she said. "Enjoy isn't the word. You enjoy eating ices. It made me happy. It's unhappy music, but it made me happy."

Gumbril hailed a cab and gave the address of his rooms in Great Russell Street. "Happy," he repeated, as they sat there side by side in the darkness. He, too, was happy.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"To my rooms," said Gumbril, "we shall be quiet there." He was afraid she might object to going there—after yesterday. But she made no comment.

"Some people think that it's only possible to be happy if one makes a noise," she said, after a pause. "I find it's too delicate and melancholy for noise. Being happy is rather melancholy—like the most beautiful landscape, like those trees and the grass and the clouds and the sunshine to-day."

"From the outside," said Gumbril, "it even looks rather dull." They stumbled up the dark staircase to his rooms. Gumbril lit a pair of candles and put the kettle on the gas ring. They sat together on the divan sipping tea. In the rich, soft light of the candles she looked different, more beautiful. The silk of her dress seemed wonderfully rich and glossy, like the petals of a tulip, and on her face, on her bare arms and neck the light seemed to spread an impalpable bright bloom. On the wall behind them, their shadows ran up towards the ceiling, enormous and profoundly black.

"How unreal it is," Gumbril whispered. "Not true. This remote secret room. These lights and shadows out of another time. And you out of nowhere and I, out of a past utterly remote from yours, sitting together here, together—and being happy. That's the strangest thing of all. Being quite senselessly happy. It's unreal, unreal."

"But why," said Emily, "why? It's here and happening now. It *is* real."

"It all might vanish, at any moment," he said.

Emily smiled rather sadly. "It'll vanish in due time," she said. "Quite naturally, not by magic; it'll vanish the way everything else vanishes and changes. But it's here now."

They gave themselves up to the enchantment. The candles burned, two shining eyes of flame, without a wink, minute after minute. But for them were no longer any minutes. Emily leaned against him, her body held in the crook of his arm, her head resting on his shoulder. He caressed his cheek against her hair; sometimes, very gently, he kissed her forehead or her closed eyes.

"If I had known you years ago . . ." she sighed. "But I was a silly little idiot then. I shouldn't have noticed any difference between you and anybody else."

"I shall be very jealous." Emily spoke again after another timeless silence. "There must never be anybody else, never the shadow of anybody else."

"There never will be anybody else," said Gumbril.

Emily smiled and, opening her eyes, looked up at him. "Ah, not here," she said, "not in this real unreal room. Not during this eternity. But there will be other rooms just as real as this."

"Not so real, not so real." He bent his face towards hers. She closed her eyes again and the lids fluttered with a sudden tremulous movement at the touch of his light kiss.

For them there were no more minutes. But time passed, time passed flowing in a dark stream, stanchlessly, as though from some profound mysterious wound in the world's side, bleeding, bleeding for ever. One of the candles had burned down to the socket and the long smoky flame wavered unsteadily. The flickering light troubled their eyes; the shadows twitched and stirred uneasily. Emily looked up at him.

"What's the time?" she said.

Gumbril looked at his watch. It was nearly one o'clock. "Too late for you to get back," he said.

"Too late?" Emily sat up. Ah, the enchantment was breaking, was giving way, like a film of ice beneath a weight, like a web before a thrust of the wind. They looked at one another. "What shall I do?" she asked.

"You could sleep here," Gumbril answered in a voice that came from a long way away.

She sat for a long time in silence, looking through half closed eyes at the expiring candle flame. Gumbril watched her in an agony of suspense. Was the ice to be broken, the web-work finally and for ever torn? The enchantment could still be prolonged, the eternity renewed. He felt his heart beating in his breast; he held his breath. It would be terrible if she were to go now, it would be a kind of death. The flame of the candle flickered more violently, leaping up in a thin, long, smoky flare, sinking again almost to darkness. Emily got up and blew out the candle. The other still burned calmly and steadily.

"May I stay?" she asked. "Will you allow me?"

He understood the meaning of her question and nodded. "Of course," he said.

"Of course? Is it as much of course as all that?"

"When I say so." He smiled at her. The eternity had been renewed, the enchantment prolonged. There was no need to think of anything now but the moment. The past was forgotten, the future abolished. There was only this secret room and the candle-light and the unreal, impossible happiness of being two. Now that this peril of a disenchantment had been averted, it would last for ever. He got up from the couch, crossed the room, he took her hands and kissed them.

"Shall we sleep now?" she asked.

Gumbril nodded.

"Do you mind if I blow out the light?" And without waiting for his answer, Emily turned, gave a puff and the room was in darkness. He heard the rustling of her undressing. Hastily he stripped off his own clothing, pulled back the coverlet from the divan. The bed was made and ready; he opened it and slipped between the sheets. A dim greenish light from the gas lamp in the street below came up between the parted curtains, illuminating faintly the further end of the room. Against this tempered darkness he could see her, silhouetted, standing quite still, as if hesitating on some invisible brink.

"Emily," he whispered.

"I'm coming," Emily answered. She stood there, unmoving, a few seconds longer, then overstepped the brink. She came silently across the room, and sat down on the edge of the low couch. Gumbril lay perfectly still, without speaking, waiting in the enchanted timeless darkness. Emily lifted her knees, slid her feet in under the sheet, then stretched herself out beside him, her body, in the narrow bed, touching his. Gumbril felt that she was trembling; trembling, a sharp involuntary start, a little shudder, another start.

"You're cold," he said and slipping one arm beneath her shoulders he drew her, limp and unresisting, towards him. She lay there, pressed against him. Gradually the trembling ceased. Quite still, quite still in the calm of the enchantment. The past is forgotten, the future abolished; there is only this dark and everlasting moment. A drugged and intoxicated stupor of happiness possessed his spirit; a numbness, warm and delicious, lay upon him. And yet through the stupor he knew with a dreadful anxious certainty that the end would soon be there. Like a man on the night before his execution he looked forward through the endless present; he foresaw the end of his eternity. And after? Everything was uncertain and unsafe.

Very gently, he began caressing her shoulder, her long slender arm, drawing his finger tips lightly and slowly over her smooth skin; slowly from her neck, over her shoulder, lingeringly round the elbow to her hand. Again, again: he was learning her arm. The form of it was part of the knowledge, now, of his finger tips; his fingers knew it as they knew a piece of music, as they knew Mozart's Twelfth Sonata, for example. And the themes that crowd so quickly one after another at the beginning of the first movement played themselves aerially, glitteringly in his mind; they became a part of the enchantment.

Through the silk of her shift he learned her curving side, her smooth straight back and the ridge of her spine. He stretched down, touched her feet, her knees. Under the smock he learned her warm body, lightly, slowly caressing. He knew her, his fingers, he felt, could build her up, a warm and curving statue in the darkness. He did not desire her; to desire would have been to break the enchantment. He let himself sink deeper and deeper into his dark stupor of happiness. She was asleep in his arms; and soon he too was asleep. . . .

NOTE ON JULIEN GREEN'S
"THE DARK JOURNEY"

Angèle, a young orphan, is employed by Madame Londe, the proprietress of a restaurant in a small French town. Paul Gueret, a tutor, recently arrived, soon becomes infatuated with Angèle, and as a token of affection gives her a little ring that he has stolen from his wife. In the meantime Paul is told by M. Grosgeorge, in whose household he tutors, that he is wasting his life with a wife who was not made for him. M. Grosgeorge's insistence stirs Paul.

Angèle has fallen in love with Paul, but she wonders if he will hate her if he finds out that she is used as a prostitute for the clients of Madame Londe. The clients at length inform Paul of Angèle's history. Paul grows feverish both in the agony of hatred for his wife and in the horror of the revelation about Angèle. Yet he thrills to know that he can possess her. He rushes out into the night, a madman, and storms her house. He is bruised and bloody after breaking into her room, but she is not there. Our selection begins at this point.

JULIEN GREEN

The Dark Journey

Paris-born (1900) and Paris-bred, Julien Green is of American origin and has often visited the home of his ancestors. His first novel, *Avarice House,* though written in French, treats of our South. He followed this with *The Closed Garden,* the haunting tale of a girl living in a small French town with her father, a schoolteacher retired on a pension. Green's knowledge of the processes of women's thought is uncanny. He has indeed written some of the most distinguished novels of our time, one of which, *Leviathan,* is excerpted here as *The Dark Journey* (1928). This intense melodrama of passion, laid in a small French town, turns about the love of a married tutor for a pretty young laundress, Angèle, who lives above a cheap restaurant. Its owner, who is also a procuress, uses Angèle as her chief bait. Green treats of the passions and obscure dramas which consume men and women, fever them, and produce dementias. Yet he is, of all writers, furthest from obvious melodrama: his internal logic, his infallible sense of restraint, makes him a kinsman of Shakespeare in using violent themes in order to have range for his revealing insights.

LYING on the bed, he felt drenched in the fragrance of her absent body; he found the place where her head must have rested and laid his own cheek, his lips, his eyes, in the same place, running his bleeding hands over the sheets and the pillow, full of a perfume which intoxicated him.

Steps began to run up and down the corridor. A door opened and shut again. A voice asked, "What is it? What's the matter?" and then, emboldened by the silence, it began to shout: "Help! Help!!"

He heard without understanding, as one hears a voice that wakes one from deep sleep. Then the voice drew nearer until it was outside the door. It was Madame Londe shouting; fear gripped her by the throat, but for all that she shouted louder and louder, and once she called Angèle.

After a moment he pulled himself together and, leaning on his elbow, he tore the pillow-case from the pillow and stuffed it into his coat pocket. Then he rose and took a few steps round the room. His eyes wandered from one object to another, from the iron bed that had creaked beneath his weight to the little mirror that reflected his haggard face. He saw the damp-stained walls, the two straw-bottomed chairs near the door, the table which had lost its drawer. He meant to carry way with him the memory of that room into which life had led him to deceive him, in the same way as he was taking the pillow-case over which Angèle's hair had spread.

As he stepped over the hand-rail there was a loud knocking at the door; then the door opened, but he had already slipped from the window and fallen in a heap at the foot of the wall. From the road he could hear Madame Londe's exclamations as she broke into the empty room and discovered the blood-stained bed. She had only to lean out of the window to see him. He stood erect, in spite of a pain in his side caused by the fall, and crept along the side of the house until he reached the road at its corner. There he waited to recover his breath. In his anguish, and to stifle the harsh sound of his breathing, he pressed the stolen pillow-case to his face. The smell of it made him dizzy, and he closed his eyes. A whole world of memories sprang up before him. So many things had come into his life since the moment he had met Angèle, so many little things the sum total of which was such that it seemed to him that there would be enough for long years of suffering.

He was suddenly recalled to his danger and opened his eyes. Madame Londe was shouting from the window. From where he stood he could see the yellow light shed by the lamp she held in her hand. He put the pillow-case back into his pocket, and buttoned up his jacket as though he were about to take to his heels. The voice which alternately rose and fell with terror was shouting dreadful things into the night: "Angèle has gone! She has been murdered! There's blood all over everything! I heard a man here! It was he who did it!"

He looked undecidedly to right and to left. To the right lay the town which would soon be roused by the woman's screams. To the left lay the Sommeillante and the open country, but to go to the left was to risk being seen and recognized by Madame Londe. So he began to run uphill to the right. A light had already appeared in one window and people were shouting to one another from their houses, but no one had come out yet; it would be some time before they plucked up sufficient courage to do so. He hugged the wall, his knees sagging, his chest crushed by a relentless pressure. His heart beat like some frantic animal hurling itself against the bars of its prison in its efforts to escape. He had never experienced such terror. This murder they accused him of, this death he had inflicted on Angèle, would it not seem probable? Was it not even true? What else would he have done if he had found the young woman in her bed? He might perhaps have cut her throat to be revenged on her, to keep her quiet, and his hands would have been as they were now, hot and heavy and sticky.

He crossed the road and plunged into a side street which Madame Londe's cries did not reach, but he dared not stop. After dragging along for about twenty yards he came to a street which he knew well because he had followed Angèle along it; he knew it led to the river. In broad daylight Madame Londe would have seen him, but the night was still dark enough for him to risk it, and gathering his strength together he began to run again. On one side of the road stood a row of little low houses; along the other ran the coal-yard. He followed the line of the wall. At the end of the street he hesitated. He began to hear shouts again, distinctly. He looked to the left, saw nothing there, and turned sharp to the right.

The road was wide and was paved with resounding stones that made his footsteps echo. He reached the slope that ran down from it to the river and ran along the grass, beneath the plane trees that accompanied the Sommeillante in its lazy journey through the town. As soon as he reached the last of these little short trees he would be safe. For at that point began a dense wood in which he could hide.

The sky was growing gradually lighter, and a dull pale glow began to outline in the darkness the last houses of the town, which ran along the right-hand side of the highroad; then a fine rain began to fall. It was about four o'clock. Without stopping he held his burning hands out to the little fresh drops which glittered in the gray air. His exhausted body was beyond any feeling of fatigue. After a certain degree of weariness is passed, one's limbs do not suffer any more, but obey of their own accord the will that no longer has the strength to command them. If he had had to walk for another hour, for more than another hour, he could have done it.

At the edge of the wood he stumbled over a fallen branch and, letting himself fall on the ground covered with dead leaves, he fell asleep almost immediately.

He awoke toward ten o'clock and left his hiding-place. He was on the road again, but now he made his way toward the houses from which he had fled the night before. The breeze dried his clothing; he dared not use his hands, for fear of reopening his wounds, and he walked along with his hair tangled and his body burning with a fever that sent the blood to his cheeks. One thought alone filled his mind—he must find Angèle. He had set out to do so, and he must succeed. It was impossible that this awful night, in which he had endured so much concentrated suffering, could be nothing but a meaningless nightmare.

It must have a price; there must be somewhere in the course of time an hour, a minute, that would redeem it.

People passed close by him. He did not see them or return their greetings. He would go to the restaurant and ask where Angèle was. Little did he care about what they said of his appearance or of his hands black with blood, or about the suspicions which he would arouse. He could not be arrested because his hair was untidy and his hands scratched. But what if something really had happened to Angèle, what if she had been assassinated in the night? What if she were dead?

What if she were dead? The thought made him stop as though an invisible hand had suddenly struck him full on the chest. He repeated the question aloud, without any fear or emotion, but with surprise at uttering strange words whose meaning was difficult to grasp; and he began to walk faster. She could not die before he had held her in his arms; she was his; life had given her to him, that mysterious will that rules our destinies, that force that dominates the world, had given him this woman. She was his because he loved her and because he had suffered for her.

When he reached the Avenue de la Sommeillante, he quickened his pace so as to avoid the attention of a group of five or six women who were talking beneath the plane trees. He could already see the open space before the restaurant and his heart beat faster. A woman in front of him was walking in the same direction. He passed her, but she ran after him and put her hand on his arm.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked.

It was Angèle.

* * * * * * *

She repeated her question:

"What's the matter with you? Where are you going?"

With the back of her hand she brushed away a strand of hair that lay across her forehead. Her eyes were wide open and bright. He looked at her for a second, then he seized her arm convulsively.

"Where did you sleep last night?" he asked her.

"They lent me a room at the laundry," she answered. "So it was you who broke into our house last night? In that case you had better not show yourself yet. Go back home quickly. Let me go."

"No."

"Come, don't let's stop here. There are people about."

"I won't let you go. Come with me."

"At least let go my arm. After all, it was I who came and spoke to you. . . . You passed quite close to me without seeing me."

"Why did you come and speak to me?"

"I won't tell you if you don't let me go. Look, there are a lot of people coming this way and looking at us. We can't stay like this."

"I will go anywhere you like, but I won't let you go."

She turned her back on the restaurant and began to walk toward the little wood. Her imprisoned arm hung by her side.

"Aren't you afraid of my calling for help?" she asked.

"No, I'm not afraid."

"Listen," she said, after a moment. "You must go home and tidy yourself up. Your clothes are all torn. People will suspect you if they see you like that."

"Will you come with me?"

"No; I don't want to walk through the town with you."

"Why not?"

"Let me go," she begged. "Please let me go. I'll tell you all that later."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"I've told you. At the laundry."

"It isn't true. Whom were you with?"

"Don't talk so loud. There's some one coming."

There was silence for a moment; then he began again, in a lower voice, without looking at her.

"Just tell me whom you were with."

"With no one."

"I know you've sold yourself to everyone in the town. Whom were you with? With Monsieur Blondeau?"

She suddenly burst into tears and tried to free herself. But he held her firmly.

"You were with some one," he went on. "Who was it? Was it Monsieur Grosgeorge?"

She made no reply. They walked along for a moment in silence, then he asked her again, shaking her arm:

"Tell me, was it he?"

"Neither he nor anyone else. I was alone. I did not sleep at Madame Londe's. I was sure that she would come and talk to me about Monsieur Blondeau."

"You've promised to go out with him on Sunday."

"I haven't promised anything. On the contrary, I have said that I wasn't going out at all."

"You lie. He told me himself that it was all arranged."

"It isn't true. Let me go. I am unhappy enough already. Let me go, I tell you! You're hurting me!"

He dragged her along with all his strength and compelled her to leave the road and climb down the embankment.

"Since you are afraid of people seeing us," he said, "we will walk on the river bank."

The voice in which these words were uttered and the look that accompanied them terrified the girl; she suddenly had the impression that the slope down which she was going against her will was cutting her off from life. The idea of calling for help crossed her mind again, but Guéret seemed to read this intention in her eyes, for he looked at her and said:

"I am stronger than you now. If you shout I'll throw myself into the water with you and we will drown."

"Alas!" said she, mastering her emotion. "I never dreamt of calling out."

"Why do you say, 'Alas!'?"

"Because you are in such a state. . . . You look as though you were ill."

For the first time since she had known him she saw him laugh. But he became serious again at once.

"I bet that worries you!"

"Yes, it does."

"No, it doesn't," he said, shaking her arm again. "It doesn't worry you in the least, but you are afraid of me. However much you may persuade yourself that some one will pass in a moment, you know quite well that if I want us to drown I've got about four times as much time as I need. And then you say you're worried about me. You may keep your worry for other people."

She felt the heat of his breath on her face and turned her head slightly away.

"Go on! Tell me that I disgust you," he said, suddenly.

"No, no!" she said, quivering. "On the contrary, it was on your account that I left Madame Londe. I wanted to explain to you."

"Tell me that I disgust you," he repeated, fiercely. "I order you to."

"But I tell you it isn't true."

He thrust her violently away from him, without letting her go, and forced her to her knees.

"Say it, if you value your life!"

"All right, yes!" she moaned, horrified.

"Say, 'You disgust me.'"

"Yes," she sobbed. "All right, you . . . disgust me. Let me go!"

With her free arm she tried to reach one of the little bushes that bordered the Sommeillante and whose tops could be seen from the road on the embankment.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked.

"I'm trying to get up. You see I am."

He was standing before her, his whole face aflame, hiding the sky from her with his great height and his gigantic shoulders. He let her struggle for a moment without letting go her arm, which twisted and turned in his grasp. She succeeded in raising one of her knees and placing her foot flat on the ground. Then her eyes sought those of the man as though imploring him to let her take advantage of this victory; but he suddenly pushed her back and she fell on the river bank; in her surprise and terror she uttered a scream.

"Stop it!" he ordered, bending over her.

But she was no longer mistress of herself; her heart was beating too fast; a terrible shriek broke from her throat, in spite of herself, the scream of a trapped animal that sees no other expedient than in its cries of pain and despair. The sight of her fear drove Guéret mad. First he struck her with his open hand, then, dropping her wrist, he took her head between his hands and struck it several times on the ground. She was panting now, but she still screamed. He put his hand over her mouth and she bit it. Then a kind of frenzy took possession of him, a frenzy of rage and misery. He gazed around him with the look of a man who has fallen into the sea. He waved his arms about, striking the branches of the trees around him, and then suddenly he seized one of them and clinging frantically to it, tried to break it off. It bent once or twice and finally broke with a horrible tearing sound, leaving a great white wound in the tree from which it was torn.

Angèle had risen and was running along the Sommeillante; when she was twenty yards away from Guéret she tried to climb back up the embankment, but it was six feet high there and too steep for her to climb; she was not strong enough. So she started running again along the bank.

He caught her up in a few strides and seized her by the head. The wretched woman's heavy black hair came down and rippled over the man's arm. For a second he paused as he felt the coolness and weight of her tresses against the back of his hand; then his fingers closed again. She cried out and tried to turn round to face him, but he flung the branch he held to one side and, putting both his arms around her struggling body, he let himself fall to the ground with her. The girl was panting, overcome with exhaustion and terror. In the rage which made him lose all control of his actions he suddenly had a spasm of pity as he saw the whiteness of the skin throbbing with her labored breathing, and he murmured the girl's name; but she looked at him through the long strands of hair which half hid her face and began to scream again, beside herself at the thought that perhaps the man was going to kill her. She saw the fury return to his eyes in a kind of wave which changed their color; then she closed her eyes. He held her by the neck, stifling her screams in her throat.

"Stop it!" he repeated, in a voice of supplication and fury. And as she tried to free herself and scream again he struck her several times on the chest and on the face. It suddenly seemed to him as though the river, the trees, the air, everything, was whirling around him and that a continuous roaring filled the sky. His fists rose and fell mechanically. His only thought was to stop the abominable screams whose shrillness pierced his brain like a knife. Then terror, the same terror as that of his victim, suddenly gripped him. He could no longer escape from himself or his crime, or stop his hands from acting, or stop the girl's screams. Her eyes no longer looked at him; they were turned back in an effort to escape the sight of the face leaning over her, and as she lay there she looked like a blind mad woman, and a little like the vision of a murdered woman that he had had the night before.

Then he suddenly seized the branch that he had thrown on one side and which still lay within his reach, and in the violence of his anger he raised it and beat the girl across the face with it, on her cheeks and forehead, until she stopped screaming and the sight of those beloved features was hidden from their conqueror by blood.

NOTE ON MARCEL PROUST'S "SWANN'S WAY"

Our selections are preceded by a description of the Verdurin's "faithful"—a group of people who flutter about and flatter the Verdurins. The family is rich, because of the large dowry brought by the wife to her aristocrat husband.

The "faithful" are a curious circle. Ostensibly aristocratic, they nevertheless maintain intimate relations with a lower peripheral social world. Odette de Crécy, a courtesan, is part of this circle.

She tells them of her charming friend, Charles Swann. He is a parvenu who wishes to enter the high society of "Old France" and to acquire those distinguished tastes and sentiments that will make his social origins forgotten. Incidentally, he is a Jew, and hence outside the apparently closed world of French aristocratic society. Nevertheless, this society always opens its doors to money —but only after a prolonged minuet. Amusingly enough, Swann is able to crash through only by the aid of a courtesan.

MARCEL PROUST

Swann's Way

Marcel Proust (1871-1922), one of the most important forces in modern literature, was born in Paris. From childhood he closely observed the mercantile society which his mother frequented as well as the aristocratic world then reluctantly being submerged. Proust was an invalid from childhood, yet he attended the Lycée Condorcet and even served in the army. Eventually he was confined to a cork-lined room, in which he produced the series of long novels collectively termed *Remembrance of Things Past.* The first of these, *Swann's Way* (1912), with its celebrated introduction, created a new method, which some critics esteem as the most significant discovery in letters, and which others, like Aldous Huxley, consider the most detestable subjective immersion, a degradation of man and art. Publishers did not understand Proust's work at first, and he had to pay for the printing of *Swann's Way.* Few critics are neutral on the subject of Proust, yet none can deny that he is the master of memory, time, and dream. Through these spectra he sees conventions and vice. Having abolished the dramatic form of the novel, he substituted what he considered the true sequence: the order of recollection and arrangement in the narrator's mind. In the following excerpt, Swann, the parvenu, is in love with the socially dubious Odette.

BUT while each of these attachments, each of these flirtations had been the realisation, more or less complete, of a dream born of the sight of a face or a form which Swann had spontaneously, and without effort on his part, found charming, it was quite another matter when, one day at the theatre, he was introduced to Odette de Crécy by an old friend of his own, who had spoken of her to him as a ravishing creature with whom he might very possibly come to an understanding; but had made her out to be harder of conquest than she actually was, so as to appear to be conferring a special favour by the introduction. She had struck Swann not, certainly, as being devoid of beauty, but as endowed with a style of beauty which left him indifferent, which aroused in him no desire, which gave him, indeed, a sort of physical repulsion; as one of those women of whom every man can name some, and each will name different examples, who are the converse of the type which our senses demand. To give him any pleasure her profile was too sharp, her skin too delicate, her cheek-bones too prominent, her features too tightly drawn. Her eyes were fine, but so large that they seemed to be bending beneath their own weight, strained the rest of her face and always made her appear unwell or in an ill humour. Some time after this introduction at the theatre she had written to ask Swann whether she might see his collections, which would interest her so much, she, "an ignorant woman with a taste for beautiful things," saying that she would know him better when once she had seen him in his "home," where she imagined him to be "so comfortable with his tea and his books"; although she had not concealed her surprise at his being in that part of the town, which must be so depressing, and was "not nearly smart enough for such a very smart man." And when he allowed her to come she had said to him as she left how sorry she was to have stayed so short a time in a house into which she was so glad to have found her way at last, speaking of him as though he had meant something more to her than the rest of the people she knew, and appearing to unite their two selves with a kind of romantic bond which had made him smile. But at the time of life, tinged already with disenchantment, which Swann was approaching, when a man can content himself with being in love for the pleasure of loving without expecting too much in return, this linking of hearts, if it is no longer, as in early youth, the goal towards which love, of necessity, tends, still is bound to love by so strong an association of ideas that it may well become the cause of love if it presents itself first. In his younger days a man dreams of possessing the heart of the woman whom he loves; later, the feeling that he posseses the heart of a woman may be enough to make him fall in love with her. And so, at an age when it would appear—since one seeks in love before everything else a subjective pleasure—that the taste for feminine beauty must play the larger part in its procreation, love may come into being, love of the most physical order, without any foundation in desire. At this time of life a man has already been wounded more than once by the darts of love; it no longer evolves by itself, obeying its own incomprehensible and fatal laws, before his passive and astonished heart. We come to its aid; we falsify it by memory and by suggestion; recognising one of its symptoms we recall and recreate the rest. Since we possess its hymn, engraved on our hearts in its entirety, there is no need of any woman to repeat the opening lines, potent with the admiration which her beauty inspires, for us to remember all that follows. And if she begin in the middle, where it sings of our existing, henceforward, for one another only, we are well enough attuned to that music to be able to take it up and follow our partner, without hesitation, at the first pause in her voice.

Odette de Crécy came again to see Swann; her visits grew more frequent, and doubtless each visit revived the sense of disappointment which he felt at the sight of a face whose details he had somewhat forgotten in the interval, not remembering it as either so expressive or, in spite of her youth, so faded; he used to regret, while she was talking to him, that her really considerable beauty was not of the kind which he spontaneously admired. It must be remarked that Odette's face appeared thinner and more prominent than it actually was, because her forehead and the upper part of her cheeks, a single and almost plane surface, were covered by the masses of hair which women wore at that period, drawn forward in a fringe, raised in crimped waves and falling in stray locks over her ears; while as for her figure, and she was admirably built, it was impossible to make out its continuity (on account of the fashion then prevailing, and in spite of her being one of the best-dressed women in Paris) for the corset, jetting forwards in an arch, as though over an imaginary stomach, and ending in a sharp point, beneath which bulged out the balloon of her double skirts, gave a woman, that year, the appearance of being composed of different sections badly fitted together; to such an extent did the frills, the flounces, the inner bodice follow, in complete independence, controlled only by the fancy of their designer or the rigidity of their material, the line which led them to the knots of ribbon, falls of lace, fringes of vertically hanging jet, or carried them along the bust, but nowhere attached themselves to the living creature, who, according as the architecture of their fripperies drew them towards or away from her own, found herself either strait-laced to suffocation or else completely buried.

But, after Odette had left him, Swann would think with a smile of her telling him how the time would drag until he allowed her to come again; he remembered the anxious, timid way in which she had once begged him that it might not be very long, and the way in which she had looked at him then, fixing upon him her fearful and imploring gaze, which gave her a touching air beneath the bunches of artificial pansies fastened in the front of her round bonnet of white straw, tied with strings of black velvet. "And won't you," she had ventured, "come just once and take tea with me?" He had pleaded pressure of work, an essay—which, in reality, he had abandoned years ago—on Vermeer of Delft. "I know that I am quite useless," she had replied, "a little wild thing like me beside a learned great man like you. I should be like the frog in the fable! And yet I should so much like to learn, to know things, to be initiated. What fun it would be to become a regular book-worm, to bury my nose in a lot of old papers!" she had gone on, with that self-satisfied air which a smart woman adopts when she insists that her one desire is to give herself up, without fear of soiling her fingers, to some unclean task, such as cooking the dinner, with her "hands right in the dish itself." "You will only laugh at me, but this painter who stops you from seeing me," she meant Vermeer, "I have never even heard of him; is he alive still? Can I see any of his things in Paris, so as to have some idea of what is going on behind that great brow which works so hard, that head which I feel sure is always puzzling away about things; just to be able to say 'There, that's what he's thinking about!' What a dream it would be to be able to help you with your work."

He had sought an excuse in his fear of forming new friendships, which he gallantly described as his fear of a hopeless passion. "You are afraid of falling in love? How funny that is, when I go about seeking nothing else, and would give my soul just to find a little love somewhere!" she had said, so naturally and with such an air of conviction that he had been genuinely touched. "Some woman must have made you suffer. And you think that the rest are all like her. She can't have understood you: you are so utterly different from ordinary men. That's what I liked about you when I first saw you; I felt at once that you weren't like everybody else."

"And then, besides, there's yourself—" he had continued, "I know what women are; you must have a whole heap of things to do, and never any time to spare."

"I? Why, I have never anything to do. I am always free, and I always will be free if you want me. At whatever hour of the day or night it may suit you to see me, just send for me, and I shall be only too delighted to come. Will you do that? Do you know what I should really like—to introduce you to Mme. Verdurin, where I go every evening. Just fancy my finding you there, and thinking that it was a little for my sake that you had gone."

No doubt, in thus remembering their conversations, in thinking about her thus when he was alone, he did no more than call her image into being among those of countless other women in his romantic dreams; but if, thanks to some accidental circumstance (or even perhaps without that assistance, for the circumstance which presents itself at the moment when a mental state, hitherto latent, makes itself felt, may well have had no influence whatsoever upon that state), the image of Odette de Crécy came to absorb the whole of his dreams, if from those dreams the memory of her could no longer be eliminated, then her bodily imperfections would no longer be of the least importance, nor would the conformity of her body, more or less than any other, to the requirements of Swann's taste; since, having become the body of her whom he loved, it must henceforth be the only one capable of causing him joy or anguish. . . .

One day when Swann had gone out early in the afternoon to pay a call, and had failed to find the person at home whom he wished to see, it occurred to him to go, instead, to Odette, at an hour when, although he never went to her house then as a rule, he knew that she was always at home, resting or writing letters until tea-time, and would enjoy seeing her for a moment, if it did not disturb her. The porter told him that he believed Odette to be in; Swann rang the bell, thought that he heard a sound, that he heard footsteps, but no one came to the door. Anxious and annoyed, he went round to the other little street, at the back of her house, and stood beneath her bedroom window; the curtains were drawn and he could see nothing; he knocked loudly upon the pane, he shouted; still no one came. He could see that the neighbours were staring at him. He turned away, thinking that, after all, he had perhaps been mistaken in believing that he heard footsteps; but he remained so preoccupied with the suspicion that he could turn his mind to nothing else. After waiting for an hour, he returned. He found her at home; she told him that she had been in the house when he rang, but had been asleep; the bell had awakened her; she had guessed that it must be Swann, and had run out to meet him, but he had already gone. She had, of course, heard him knocking at the window. Swann could at once detect in this story one of those fragments of literal truth which liars, when taken by surprise, console themselves by introducing into the composition of the falsehood which they have to invent, thinking that it can be safely incorporated, and will lend the whole story an air of verisimilitude. It was true that, when Odette had just done something which she did not wish to disclose, she would take pains to conceal it in a secret place in her heart. But as soon as she found herself face to face with the man to whom she was obliged to lie, she became uneasy, all her ideas melted like wax before a flame, her inventive and her reasoning faculties were paralysed, she might ransack her brain but would find only a void; still, she must say something, and there lay within her reach precisely the fact which she had wished to conceal, which, being the truth, was the one thing that had remained. She broke off from it a tiny fragment, of no importance in itself, assuring herself that, after all, it was the best thing to do, since it was a detail of the truth, and less dangerous, therefore, than a falsehood. "At any rate, this is true," she said to herself; "that's always something to the good; he may make inquiries; he will see that this is true; it won't be this, anyhow, that will give me away." But she was wrong; it was what gave her away; she had not taken into account that this fragmentary detail of the truth had sharp edges which could not be made to fit in, except to those contiguous fragments of the truth from which she had arbitrarily detached it, edges which, whatever the fictitious details in which she might embed it, would continue to shew, by their overlapping angles and by the gaps which she had forgotten to fill, that its proper place was elsewhere.

"She admits that she heard me ring, and then knock, that she knew it was myself, that she wanted to see me," Swann thought to himself. "But that doesn't correspond with the fact that she did not let me in."

He did not, however, draw her attention to this inconsistency, for he thought that, if left to herself, Odette might perhaps produce some falsehood which would give him a faint indication of the truth; she spoke; he did not interrupt her, he gathered up, with an eager and sorrowful piety, the words that fell from her lips, feeling (and rightly feeling, since she was hiding the truth behind them as she spoke) that, like the veil of a sanctuary, they kept a vague imprint, traced a faint outline of that infinitely precious and, alas, undiscoverable truth;—what she had been doing, that afternoon, at three o'clock, when he had called,—a truth of which he would never possess any more than these falsifications, illegible and divine traces, a truth which would exist henceforward only in the secretive memory of this creature, who would contemplate it in utter ignorance of its value, but would never yield it up to him. It was true that he had, now and then, a strong suspicion that Odette's daily activities were not in themselves passionately interesting, and that such relations as she might have with other men did not exhale, naturally, in a universal sense, or for every rational being, a spirit of morbid gloom capable of infecting with fever or of inciting to suicide. He realised, at such moments, that that interest, that gloom, existed in him only as a malady might exist, and that, once he was cured of the malady, the actions of Odette, the kisses that she might have bestowed, would become once again as innocuous as those of countless other women. But the consciousness that the painful curiosity with which Swann now studied them had its origin only in himself was not enough to make him decide that it was unreasonable to regard that curiosity as important, and to take every possible step to satisfy it. Swann had, in fact, reached an age the philosophy of which—supported, in his case, by the current philosophy of the day, as well as by that of the circle in which he had spent most of his life, the group that surrounded the Princesse des Laumes, in which one's intelligence was understood to increase with the strength of one's disbelief in everything, and nothing real and incontestable was to be discovered, except the individual tastes of each of its members—is no longer that of youth, but a positive, almost a medical philosophy, the philosophy of men who, instead of fixing their aspirations upon external objects, endeavour to separate from the accumulation of the years already spent a definite residue of habits and passions which they can regard as characteristic and permanent, and with which they will deliberately arrange, before anything else, that the kind of existence which they choose to adopt shall not prove inharmonious. Swann deemed it wise to make allowance in his life for the suffering which he derived from not knowing what Odette had done, just as he made allowance for the impetus which a damp climate always gave to his eczema; to anticipate in his budget the expenditure of a considerable sum on procuring, with regard to the daily occupations of Odette, information the lack of which would make him unhappy, just as he reserved a margin for the gratification of other tastes from which he knew that pleasure was to be expected (at least, before he had fallen in love) such as his taste for collecting things, or for good cooking.

When he proposed to take leave of Odette, and to return home, she begged him to stay a little longer, and even detained him forcibly, seizing him by the arm as he was opening the door to go. But he gave no thought to that, for, among the crowd of gestures and speeches and other little incidents which go to make up a conversation, it is inevitable that we should pass (without noticing anything that arouses our interest) by those that hide a truth for which our suspicions are blindly searching, whereas we stop to examine others beneath which nothing lies concealed. She kept on saying: "What a dreadful pity; you never by any chance come in the afternoon, and the one time you do come then I miss you." He knew very well that she was not sufficiently in love with him to be so keenly distressed merely at having missed his visit, but as she was a good-natured woman, anxious to give him pleasure, and often sorry when she had done anything that annoyed him, he found it quite natural that she should be sorry, on this occasion, that she had deprived him of that pleasure of spending an hour in her company, which was so very great a pleasure, if not to herself, at any rate to him. All the same, it was a matter of so little importance that her air of unrelieved sorrow began at length to bewilder him. She reminded him, even more than was usual, of the faces of some of the women created by the painter of the "Primavera." She had, at that moment, their downcast, heartbroken expression, which seems ready to succumb beneath the burden of a grief too heavy to be borne, when they are merely allowing the Infant Jesus to play with a pomegranate, or watching Moses pour water into a trough. He had seen the same sorrow once before on her face, but when, he could no longer say. Then, suddenly, he remembered it; it was when Odette had lied, in apologising to Mme. Verdurin on the evening after the dinner from which she had stayed away on a pretext of illness, but really so that she might be alone with Swann. Surely, even had she been the most scrupulous of women, she could hardly have felt remorse for so innocent a lie. But the lies which Odette ordinarily told were less innocent, and served to prevent discoveries which might have involved her in the most terrible difficulties with one or another of her friends. And so, when she lied, smitten with fear, feeling herself to be but feebly armed for her defence, unconfident of success, she was inclined to weep from sheer exhaustion, as children weep sometimes when they have not slept. She knew, also, that her lie, as a rule, was doing a serious injury to the man to whom she was telling it, and that she might find herself at his mercy if she told it badly. Therefore she felt at once humble and culpable in his presence. And when she had to tell an insignificant, social lie its hazardous associations, and the memories which it recalled, would leave her weak with a sense of exhaustion and penitent with a consciousness of wrongdoing.

What depressing lie was she now concocting for Swann's benefit, to give her that pained expression, that plaintive voice, which seemed to falter beneath the effort that she was forcing herself to make, and to plead for pardon? He had an idea that it was not merely the truth about what had occurred that afternoon that she was endeavouring to hide from him, but something more immediate, something, possibly, which had not yet happened, but might happen now at any time, and, when it did, would throw a light upon that earlier event. At that moment, he heard the front-door bell ring. Odette never stopped speaking, but her words dwindled into an inarticulate moan. Her regret at not having seen Swann that afternoon, at not having opened the door to him, had melted into a universal despair.

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. . . Already he had begun to put further questions. For his jealousy, which had taken an amount of trouble, such as no enemy would have incurred, to strike him this mortal blow, to make him forcibly acquainted with the most cruel pain that he had ever known, his jealousy was not satisfied that he had yet suffered enough, and sought to expose his bosom to an even deeper wound. Like an evil deity, his jealousy was inspiring Swann, was thrusting him on towards destruction. It was not his fault, but Odette's alone, if at first his punishment was not more severe.

"My darling," he began again, "it's all over now; was it with anyone I know?"

"No, I swear it wasn't; besides, I think I exaggerated, I never really went as far as that."

He smiled, and resumed with: "Just as you like. It doesn't really matter, but it's unfortunate that you can't give me any name. If I were able to form an idea of the person that would prevent my ever thinking of her again. I say it for your own sake, because then I shouldn't bother you any more about it. It's so soothing to be able to form a clear picture of things in one's mind. What is really terrible is what one cannot imagine. But you've been so sweet to me; I don't want to tire you. I do thank you, with all my heart, for all the good that you have done me. I've quite finished now. Only one word more: how many times?"

"Oh, Charles! can't you see, you're killing me? It's all ever so long ago. I've never given it a thought. Anyone would say that you were positively trying to put those ideas into my head again. And then you'ld be a lot better off!" she concluded, with unconscious stupidity but with intentional malice.

"I only wished to know whether it had been since I knew you. It's only natural. Did it happen here, ever? You can't give me any particular evening, so that I can remind myself what I was doing at the time? You understand, surely, that it's not possible that you don't remember with whom, Odette, my love."

"But I don't know; really, I don't. I think it was in the Bois, one evening when you came to meet us on the Island. You had been dining with the Princesse des Laumes," she added, happy to be able to furnish him with an exact detail, which testified to her veracity. "At the next table there was a woman whom I hadn't seen for ever so long. She said to me, 'Come along round behind the rock, there, and look at the moonlight on the water!' At first I just yawned, and said, 'No, I'm too tired, and I'm quite happy where I am, thank you.' She swore there'd never been anything like it in the way of moonlight. 'I've heard that tale before,' I said to her; you see, I knew quite well what she was after." Odette narrated this episode almost as if it were a joke, either because it appeared to her to be quite natural, or because she thought that she was thereby minimising its importance, or else so as not to appear ashamed. But, catching sight of Swann's face, she changed her tone, and:

"You are a fiend!" she flung at him, "you enjoy tormenting me, making me tell you lies, just so that you'll leave me in peace."

This second blow struck at Swann was even more excruciating than the first. Never had he supposed it to have been so recent an affair, hidden from his eyes that had been too innocent to discern it, not in a past which he had never known, but in evenings which he so well remembered, which he had lived through with Odette, of which he had supposed himself to have such an intimate, such an exhaustive knowledge, and which now assumed, retrospectively, an aspect of cunning and deceit and cruelty. In the midst of them parted, suddenly, a gaping chasm, that moment on the Island in the Bois de Boulogne. Without being intelligent, Odette had the charm of being natural. She had recounted, she had acted the little scene with so much simplicity that Swann, as he gasped for breath, could vividly see it: Odette yawning, the "rock there," . . . He could hear her answer—alas, how lightheartedly—"I've heard that tale before!" He felt that she would tell him nothing more that evening, that no further revelation was to be expected for the present. He was silent for a time, then said to her:

"My poor darling, you must forgive me; I know, I am hurting you dreadfully, but it's all over now; I shall never think of it again."

But she saw that his eyes remained fixed upon the things that he did not know, and on that past era of their love, monotonous and soothing in his memory because it was vague, and now rent, as with a sword-wound, by the news of that minute on the Island in the Bois, by moonlight, while he was dining with the Princesse des Laumes. But he had so far acquired the habit of finding life interesting—of marvelling at the strange discoveries that there were to be made in it—that even while he was suffering so acutely that he did not believe it possible to endure such agony for any length of time, he was saying to himself: "Life is indeed astonishing, and holds some fine surprises; it appears that vice is far more common than one has been led to believe. Here is a woman in whom I had absolute confidence, who looks so simple, so honest, who, in any case, even allowing that her morals are not strict, seemed quite normal and healthy in her tastes and inclinations. I receive a most improbable accusation, I question her, and the little that she admits reveals far more than I could ever have suspected." But he could not confine himself to these detached observations. He sought to form an exact estimate of the importance of what she had just told him, so as to know whether he might conclude that she had done these things often, and was likely to do them again. He repeated her words to himself: "I knew quite well what she was after." "Two or three times." "I've heard that tale before." But they did not reappear in his memory unarmed; each of them held a knife with which it stabbed him afresh. For a long time, like a sick man who cannot restrain himself from attempting, every minute, to make the movement that, he knows, will hurt him, he kept on murmuring to himself: "I'm quite happy where I am, thank you," "I've heard that tale before," but the pain was so intense that he was obliged to stop. He was amazed to find that actions which he had always, hitherto, judged so lightly, had dismissed, indeed, with a laugh, should have become as serious to him as a disease which might easily prove fatal. He knew any number of women whom he could ask to keep an eye on Odette, but how was he to expect them to adjust themselves to his new point of view, and not to remain at that which for so long had been his own, which had always guided him in his voluptuous existence; not to say to him with a smile: "You jealous monster, wanting to rob other people of their pleasure!" By what trap-door, suddenly lowered, had he (who had never found, in the old days, in his love for Odette, any but the most refined of pleasures) been precipitated into this new circle of hell from which he could not see how he was ever to escape. Poor Odette! He wished her no harm. She was but half to blame. Had he not been told that it was her own mother who had sold her, when she was still little more than a child, at Nice, to a wealthy Englishman? But what an agonising truth was now contained for him in those lines of Alfred de Vigny's *Journal d'un Poète* which he had previously read without emotion: "When one feels oneself smitten by love for a woman, one ought to say to oneself, 'What are her surroundings? What has been her life?' All one's future happiness lies in the answer." Swann was astonished that such simple phrases, spelt over in his mind, as, "I've heard that tale before," or "I knew quite well what she was after," could cause him so much pain. But he realised that what he had mistaken for simple phrases were indeed parts of the panoply which held and could inflict on him the anguish that he had felt while Odette was telling her story. For it was the same anguish that he now was feeling afresh. It was no good, his knowing now,—indeed, it was no good, as time went on, his having partly forgotten and altogether forgiven the offence—whenever he repeated her words his old anguish refashioned him as he had been before Odette began to speak: ignorant, trustful; his merciless jealousy placed him once again, so that he might be effectively wounded by Odette's admission, in the position of a man who does not yet know the truth; and after several months this old story would still dumbfounder him, like a sudden revelation. He marvelled at the terrible recreative power of his memory. It was only by the weakening of that generative force, whose fecundity diminishes as age creeps over one, that he could hope for a relaxation of his torments. But, as soon as the power that any one of Odette's sentences had to make Swann suffer seemed to be nearly exhausted, lo and behold another, one of those to which he had hitherto paid least attention, almost a new sentence, came to relieve the first, and to strike at him with undiminished force. The memory of the evening on which he had dined with the Princesse des Laumes was painful to him, but it was no more than the centre, the core of his pain. That radiated vaguely round about it, overflowing into all the preceding and following days. And on whatever point in it he might intend his memory to rest, it was the whole of that season, during which the Verdurins had so often gone to dine upon the Island in the Bois, that sprang back to hurt him. So violently, that by slow degrees the curiosity which his jealousy was ever exciting in him was neutralised by his fear of the fresh tortures which he would be inflicting upon himself were he to satisfy it. He recognised that all the period of Odette's life which had elapsed before she first met him, a period of which he had never sought to form any picture in his mind, was not the featureless abstraction which he could vaguely see, but had consisted of so many definite, dated years, each crowded with concrete incidents. But were he to learn more of them, he feared lest her past, now colourless, fluid and supportable, might assume a tangible, an obscene form, with individual and diabolical features. And he continued to refrain from seeking a conception of it, not any longer now from laziness of mind, but from fear of suffering. He hoped that, some day, he might be able to hear the Island in the Bois, or the Princesse des Laumes mentioned without feeling any twinge of that old rending pain; meanwhile he thought it imprudent to provoke Odette into furnishing him with fresh sentences, with the names of more places and people and of different events, which, when his malady was still scarcely healed, would make it break out again in another form.

But, often enough, the things that he did not know, that he dreaded, now, to learn, it was Odette herself who, spontaneously and without thought of what she did, revealed them to him; for the gap which her vices made between her actual life and the comparatively innocent life which Swann had believed, and often still believed his mistress to lead, was far wider than she knew. A vicious person, always affecting the same air of virtue before people whom he is anxious to keep from having any suspicion of his vices, has no register, no gauge at hand from which he may ascertain how far those vices (their continuous growth being imperceptible by himself) have gradually segregated him from the normal ways of life. In the course of their cohabitation, in Odette's mind, with the memory of those of her actions which she concealed from Swann, her other, her innocuous actions were gradually coloured, infected by these, without her being able to detect anything strange in them, without their causing any explosion in the particular region of herself in which she made them live, but when she related them to Swann, he was overwhelmed by the revelation of the duplicity to which they pointed. One day, he was trying—without hurting Odette —to discover from her whether she had ever had any dealings with procuresses. He was, as a matter of fact, convinced that she had not; the anonymous letter had put the idea into his mind, but in a purely mechanical way; it had been received there with no credulity, but it had, for all that, remained there, and Swann, wishing to be rid of the burden—a dead weight, but none the less disturbing—of this suspicion, hoped that Odette would now extirpate it for ever.

"Oh dear, no! Not that they don't simply persecute me to go to them," her smile revealed a gratified vanity which she no longer saw that it was impossible should appear legitimate to Swann. "There was one of them waited more than two hours for me yesterday, said she would give me any money I asked. It seems, there's an Ambassador who said to her, 'I'll kill myself if you don't bring her to me'—meaning me! They told her I'd gone out, but she waited and waited, and in the end I had to go myself and speak to her, before she'ld go away. I do wish you could have seen the way I tackled her; my maid was in the next room, listening, and told me I shouted fit to bring the house down;— 'But when you hear me say that I don't want to! The idea of such a thing, I don't like it at all! I should hope I'm still free to do as I please and when I please and where I please! If I needed the money, I could understand . . .' The porter has orders not to let her in again; he will tell her that I am out of town. Oh, I do wish I could have had you hidden somewhere in the room while I was talking to her. I know, you'ld have been pleased, my dear. There's some good in your little Odette, you see, after all, though people do say such dreadful things about her."

Besides, her very admissions—when she made any—of faults which she supposed him to have discovered, rather served Swann as a starting-point for fresh doubts than they put an end to the old. For her admissions never exactly coincided with his doubts. In vain might Odette expurgate her confession of all its essential part, there would remain in the accessories something which Swann had never yet imagined, which crushed him anew, and was to enable him to alter the terms of the problem of his jealousy. And these admissions he could never forget. His spirit carried them along, cast them aside, then cradled them again in its bosom, like corpses in a river. And they poisoned it. . . .

But while, an hour after his awakening, he was giving instructions to the barber, so that his stiffly brushed hair should not become disarranged on the journey, he thought once again of his dream; he saw once again, as he had felt them close beside him, Odette's pallid complexion, her too thin cheeks, her drawn features, her tired eyes, all the things which—in the course of those successive bursts of affection which had made of his enduring love for Odette a long oblivion of the first impression that he had formed of her—he had ceased to observe after the first few days of their intimacy, days to which, doubtless, while he slept, his memory had returned to seek the exact sensation of those things. And with that old, intermittent fatuity, which reappeared in him now that he was no longer unhappy, and lowered, at the same time, the average level of his morality, he cried out in his heart: "To think that I have wasted years of my life, that I have longed for death, that the greatest love that I have ever known has been for a woman who did not please me, who was not in my style!"

NOTE ON F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S
"THIS SIDE OF PARADISE"

Wealthy Amory Blaine goes through a career typical of the gilded youth of the World War I period—undergraduate life at Princeton, officership in the army, multiple, bizarre adventures with girls, each one recounted in a different form. On his way to meet one of his friends, a Catholic Monsignor, Amory stays with an uncle in Ramilly County, Maryland—and at this point the author introduces Eleanor. Our selection begins here.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

This Side of Paradise

Born into a wealthy family, educated at Princeton, and an aide-de-camp in World War I, F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) surprised his generation with a novel that was a psychological operetta, *This Side of Paradise* (1920). In it the post-war youth, hard, smart, and stirred by French symbolist and futurist literature, had found its novelist. Thereafter Fitzgerald became the exponent of the Jazz Age, the interpreter of the flippant, articulate, hard-drinking, dance-mad materialistic youth; and it was he who made the "flapper" famous. The readiness and finish of his work, however, helped to "date" it. Nevertheless Fitzgerald, who had integrity and high artistic purpose, sought to deepen his understanding. In *The Great Gatsby* (1925) he was still concerned with bright ephemera—this time, the bootlegger of Prohibition days—but years later, in *The Last Tycoon,* Fitzgerald worked in deeper soil: terror lurks beneath these sketches of Hollywood magnates. The fame of this once immensely popular writer was at its nadir just before his untimely death; it is now being reestablished as critics have begun to reinterpret the evolution of Fitzgerald as a social historian.

SUDDENLY a strange sound fell on his ears. It was a song, in a low, husky voice, a girl's voice, and whoever was singing was very close to him. A year before he might have laughed, or trembled; but in his restless mood he only stood and listened while the words sank into his consciousness:

"Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langueur
Monotone."

The lightning split the sky, but the song went on without a quaver. The girl was evidently in the field and the voice seemed to come vaguely from a haystack about twenty feet in front of him.

Then it ceased; ceased and began again in a weird chant that soared and hung and fell and blended with the rain:

"Tout suffocant
Et blême quand
Sonne l'heure
Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
Et je pleure. . . ."

"Who the devil is there in Ramilly County," muttered Amory aloud, "who would deliver Verlaine in an extemporaneous tune to a soaking haystack?"

"Somebody's there!" cried the voice unalarmed. "Who are you?—Manfred, St. Christopher, or Queen Victoria?"

"I'm Don Juan!" Amory shouted on impulse, raising his voice above the noise of the rain and the wind.

A delighted shriek came from the haystack.

"I know who you are—you're the blond boy that likes 'Ulalume'—I recognize your voice."

"How do I get up?" he cried from the foot of the haystack, whither he had arrived, dripping wet. A head appeared over the edge—it was so dark that Amory could just make out a patch of damp hair and two eyes that gleamed like a cat's.

"Run back!" came the voice, "and jump and I'll catch your hand—no, not there—on the other side."

He followed directions and as he sprawled up the side, knee-deep in hay, a small, white hand reached out, gripped his, and helped him onto the top.

"Here you are, Juan," cried she of the damp hair. "Do you mind if I drop the Don?"

"You've got a thumb like mine!" he exclaimed.

"And you're holding my hand, which is dangerous without seeing my face." He dropped it quickly.

As if in answer to his prayers came a flash of lightning and he looked eagerly at her who stood beside him on the soggy haystack, ten feet above the ground. But she had covered her face and he saw nothing but a slender figure, dark, damp, bobbed hair, and the small white hands with the thumbs that bent back like his.

"Sit down," she suggested politely, as the dark closed in on them. "If you'll sit opposite me in this hollow you can have half of the raincoat, which I was using as a water-proof tent until you so rudely interrupted me."

"I was asked," Amory said joyfully; "you asked me—you know you did."

"Don Juan always manages that," she said, laughing, "but I shan't call you that any more, because you've got reddish hair. Instead you can recite 'Ulalume' and I'll be Psyche, your soul."

Amory flushed, happily invisible under the curtain of wind and rain. They were sitting opposite each other in a slight hollow in the hay with the raincoat spread over most of them, and the rain doing for the rest. Amory was trying desperately to see Psyche, but the lightning refused to flash again, and he waited impatiently. Good Lord! supposing she wasn't beautiful—supposing she was forty and pedantic—heavens! Suppose, only suppose, she was mad. But he knew the last was unworthy. Here had Providence sent a girl to amuse him just as it sent Benvenuto Celleni men to murder, and he was wondering if she was mad, just because she exactly filled his mood.

"I'm not," she said.

"Not what?"

"Not mad. I didn't think you were mad when I first saw you, so it isn't fair that you should think so of me."

"How on earth—"

As long as they knew each other Eleanor and Amory could be "on a subject" and stop talking with the definite thought of it in their heads, yet ten minutes later speak aloud and find that their minds had followed the same channels and led them each to a parallel idea, an idea that others would have found absolutely unconnected with the first.

"Tell me," he demanded, leaning forward eagerly, "how do you know about 'Ulalume'—how did you know the color of my hair? What's your name? What were you doing here? Tell me all at once!"

Suddenly the lightning flashed in with a leap of over-reaching light and he saw Eleanor, and looked for the first time into those eyes of hers. Oh, she was magnificent—pale skin, the color of marble in starlight, slender brows, and eyes that glittered green as emeralds in the blinding glare. She was a witch, of perhaps nineteen, he judged, alert and dreamy and with the tell-tale white line over her upper lip that was a weakness and a delight. He sank back with a gasp against the wall of hay.

"Now you've seen me," she said calmly, "and I suppose you're about to say that my green eyes are burning into your brain."

"What color is your hair?" he asked intently. "It's bobbed, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's bobbed. I don't know what color it is," she answered, musing, "so many men have asked me. It's medium, I suppose— No one ever looks long at my hair. I've got beautiful eyes, though, haven't I. I don't care what you say, I have beautiful eyes."

"Answer my question, Madeline."

"Don't remember them all—besides my name isn't Madeline, it's Eleanor."

"I might have guessed it. You *look* like Eleanor—you have that Eleanor look. You know what I mean."

There was a silence as they listened to the rain.

"It's going down my neck, fellow lunatic," she offered finally.

"Answer my questions."

"Well—name of Savage, Eleanor; live in big old house mile down road; nearest living relation to be notified, grandfather—Ramilly Savage; height, five feet four inches; number on watch-case, 3077 W; nose, delicate aquiline; temperament, uncanny—"

"And me," Amory interrupted, "where did you see me?"

"Oh, you're one of *those* men," she answered haughtily, "must lug old self into conversation. Well, my boy, I was behind a hedge sunning myself one day last week, and along comes a man saying in a pleasant, conceited way of talking:

"'And now when the night was senescent'
(says he)
'And the star dials pointed to morn
At the end of the path a liquescent'
(says he)
'And nebulous lustre was born.'

So I poked my eyes up over the hedge, but you had started to run, for some unknown reason, and so I saw but the back of your beautiful head. 'Oh!' says I, 'there's a man for whom many of us might sigh,' and I continued in my best Irish—"

"All right," Amory interrupted. "Now go back to yourself."

"Well, I will. I'm one of those people who go through the world giving other people thrills, but getting few myself except those I read into men on such nights as these. I have the social courage to go on the stage, but not the energy; I haven't the patience to write books; and I never met a man I'd marry. However, I'm only eighteen."

The storm was dying down softly and only the wind kept up its ghostly surge and made the stack lean and gravely settle from side to side. Amory was in a trance. He felt that every moment was precious. He had never met a girl like this before—she would never seem quite the same again. He didn't at all feel like a character in a play, the appropriate feeling in an unconventional situation—instead, he had a sense of coming home.

"I have just made a great decision," said Eleanor after another pause, "and that is why I'm here, to answer another of your questions. I have just decided that I don't believe in immortality."

"Really! how banal!"

"Frightfully so," she answered, "but depressing with a stale, sickly depression, nevertheless. I came out here to get wet—like a wet hen; wet hens always have great clarity of mind," she concluded.

"Go on," Amory said politely.

"Well—I'm not afraid of the dark, so I put on my slicker and rubber boots and came out. You see I was always afraid, before, to say I didn't believe in God—because the lightning might strike me—but here I am and it hasn't, of course, but the main point is that this time I wasn't any more afraid of it than I had been when I was a Christian Scientist, like I was last year. So now I know I'm a materialist and I was fraternizing with the hay when you came out and stood by the woods, scared to death."

"Why, you little wretch—" cried Amory indignantly. "Scared of what?"

"Yourself!" she shouted, and he jumped. She clapped her hands and laughed. "See—see! Conscience—kill it like me! Eleanor Savage, materiologist—no jumping, no starting, come early—"

"But I *have* to have a soul," he objected. "I can't be rational—and I won't be molecular."

She leaned toward him, her burning eyes never leaving his own and whispered with a sort of romantic finality:

"I thought so, Juan, I feared so—you're sentimental. You're not like me. I'm a romantic little materialist."

"I'm not sentimental—I'm as romantic as you are. The idea, you know, is that the sentimental person thinks things will last—the romantic person has a desperate confidence that they won't." (This was an ancient distinction of Amory's.)

"Epigrams. I'm going home," she said sadly. "Let's get off the haystack and walk to the cross-roads."

They slowly descended from their perch. She would not let him help her down and motioning him away arrived in a graceful lump in the soft mud where she sat for an instant, laughing at herself. Then she jumped to her feet and slipped her hand into his, and they tiptoed across the fields, jumping and swinging from dry spot to dry spot. A transcendent delight seemed to sparkle in every pool of water, for the moon had risen and the storm had scurried away into western Maryland. When Eleanor's arm touched his he felt his hands grow cold with deadly fear lest he should lose the shadow brush with which his imagination was painting wonders of her. He watched her from the corners of his eyes as ever he did when he walked with her—she was a feast and a folly and he wished it had been his destiny to sit forever on a haystack and see life through her green eyes. His paganism soared that night and when she faded out like a gray ghost down the road, a deep singing came out of the fields and filled his way homeward. All night the summer moths flitted in and out of Amory's window; all night large looming sounds swayed in mystic revery through the silver grain—and he lay awake in the clear darkness.

September

Amory selected a blade of grass and nibbled at it scientifically.

"I never fall in love in August or September," he proffered.

"When then?"

"Christmas or Easter. I'm a liturgist."

"Easter!" She turned up her nose. "Huh! Spring in corsets!"

"Easter *would* bore spring, wouldn't she? Easter has her hair braided, wears a tailored suit."

> "Bind on thy sandals, oh, thou most fleet.
> Over the splendor and speed of thy feet—"

quoted Eleanor softly, and then added: "I suppose Hallowe'en is a better day for autumn than Thanksgiving."

"Much better—and Christmas eve does very well for winter, but summer . . ."

"Summer has no day," she said. "We can't possibly have a summer love. So many people have tried that the name's become proverbial. Summer is only the unfulfilled promise of spring, a charlatan in place of the warm balmy nights I dream of in April. It's a sad season of life without growth. . . . It has no day."

"Fourth of July," Amory suggested facetiously.

"Don't be funny!" she said, raking him with her eyes.

"Well, what could fulfil the promise of spring?"

She thought a moment.

"Oh, I suppose heaven would, if there was one," she said finally, "a sort of pagan heaven—you ought to be a materialist," she continued irrelevantly.

"Why?"

"Because you look a good deal like the pictures of Rupert Brooke."

To some extent Amory tried to play Rupert Brooke as long as he knew Eleanor. What he said, his attitude toward life, toward her, toward himself, were all reflexes of the dead Englishman's literary moods. Often she sat in the grass, a lazy wind playing with her short hair, her voice husky as she ran up and down the scale from Grantchester to Waikiki. There was something most passionate in Eleanor's reading aloud. They seemed nearer, not only mentally, but physically, when they read, than when she was in his arms, and this was often, for they fell half into love almost from the first. Yet was Amory capable of love now? He could, as always, run through the emotions in a half hour, but even while they revelled in their imaginations, he knew that neither of them could care as he had cared once before—I suppose that was why they turned to Brooke, and Swinburne, and Shelley. Their chance was to make everything fine and finished and rich and imaginative; they must bend tiny golden tentacles from his imagination to hers, that would take the place of the great, deep love that was never so near, yet never so much of a dream.

One poem they read over and over; Swinburne's "Triumph of Time," and four lines of it rang in his memory afterward on warm nights when he saw the fireflies among dusky tree trunks and heard the low drone of many frogs. Then Eleanor seemed to come out of the night and stand by him, and he heard her throaty voice, with its tone of a fleecy-headed drum, repeating:

"Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well outworn;
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
The dream foregone and the deed foreborne?"

They were formally introduced two days later, and his aunt told him her history. The Ramillys were two: old Mr. Ramilly and his granddaughter, Eleanor. She had lived in France with a restless mother whom Amory imagined to have been very like his own, on whose death she had come to America, to live in Maryland. She had gone to Baltimore first to stay with a bachelor uncle, and there she insisted on being a débutante at the age of seventeen. She had a wild winter and arrived in the country in March, having quarrelled frantically with all her Baltimore relatives, and shocked them into fiery protest. A rather fast crowd had come out, who drank cocktails in limousines and were promiscuously condescending and patronizing toward older people, and Eleanor with an esprit that hinted strongly of the boulevards, led many innocents still redolent of St. Timothy's and Farmington, into paths of Bohemian naughtiness. When the story came to her uncle, a forgetful cavalier of a more hypocritical era, there was a scene, from which Eleanor emerged, subdued but rebellious and indignant, to seek haven with her grandfather who hovered in the country on the near side of senility. That's as far as her story went; she told him the rest herself, but that was later.

Often they swam and as Amory floated lazily in the water he shut his mind to all thoughts except those of hazy soap-bubble lands where the sun splattered through wind-drunk trees. How could any one possibly think or worry, or do anything except splash and dive and loll there on the edge of time while the flower months failed. Let the days move over—sadness and memory and pain recurred outside, and here, once more, before he went on to meet them he wanted to drift and be young.

There were days when Amory resented that life had changed from an even progress along a road stretching ever in sight, with the scenery merging and blending, into a succession of quick, unrelated scenes—two years of sweat and blood, that sudden absurd instinct for paternity that Rosalind had stirred; the half-sensual, half-neurotic quality of this autumn with Eleanor. He felt that it would take all time, more than he could ever spare, to glue these strange cumbersome pictures into the scrap-book of his life. It was all like a banquet where he sat for this half-hour of his youth and tried to enjoy brilliant epicurean courses.

Dimly he promised himself a time where all should be welded together. For months it seemed that he had alternated between being borne along a stream of love or fascination, or left in an eddy, and in the eddies he had not desired to think, rather to be picked up on a wave's top and swept along again.

"The despairing, dying autumn and our love—how well they harmonize!" said Eleanor sadly one day as they lay dripping by the water.

"The Indian summer of our hearts—" he ceased.

"Tell me," she said finally, "was she light or dark?"

"Light."

"Was she more beautiful than I am?"

"I don't know," said Amory shortly.

One night they walked while the moon rose and poured a great burden of glory over the garden until it seemed fairy-land with Amory and Eleanor, dim phantasmal shapes, expressing eternal beauty in curious elfin love moods. Then they turned out of the moonlight into the trellised darkness of a vine-hung pagoda, where there were scents so plaintive as to be nearly musical.

"Light a match," she whispered. "I want to see you."

Scratch! Flare!

The night and the scarred trees were like scenery in a play, and to be there with Eleanor, shadowy and unreal, seemed somehow oddly familiar. Amory thought how it was only the past that ever seemed strange and unbelievable. The match went out.

"It's black as pitch."

"We're just voices now," murmured Eleanor, "little lonesome voices. Light another."

"That was my last match."

Suddenly he caught her in his arms.

"You *are* mine—you know you're mine!" he cried wildly . . . the moonlight twisted in through the vines and listened . . . the fireflies hung upon their whispers as if to win his glance from the glory of their eyes.

THE END OF SUMMER

"No wind is stirring in the grass; not one wind stirs . . . the water in the hidden pools, as glass, fronts the full moon and so inters the golden token in its icy mass," chanted Eleanor to the trees that skeletoned the body of the night. "Isn't it ghostly here? If you can hold your horse's feet up, let's cut through the woods and find the hidden pools."

"It's after one, and you'll get the devil," he objected, "and I don't know enough about horses to put one away in the pitch dark."

"Shut up, you old fool," she whispered irrelevantly, and, leaning over, she patted him lazily with her riding-crop. "You can leave your old plug in our stable and I'll send him over to-morrow."

"But my uncle has got to drive me to the station with this old plug at seven o'clock."

"Don't be a spoil-sport—remember, you have a tendency toward wavering that prevents you from being the entire light of my life."

Amory drew his horse up close beside, and, leaning toward her, grasped her hand.

"Say I am—*quick,* or I'll pull you over and make you ride behind me."

She looked up and smiled and shook her head excitedly.

"Oh, do!—or rather, don't! Why are all the exciting things so uncomfortable, like fighting and exploring and ski-ing in Canada? By the way, we're going to ride up Harper's Hill. I think that comes in our programme about five o'clock."

"You little devil," Amory growled. "You're going to make me stay up all night and sleep in the train like an immigrant all day to-morrow, going back to New York."

"Hush! some one's coming along the road—let's go! *Whoo-ee-oop!*" And with a shout that probably gave the belated traveller a series of shivers, she turned her horse into the woods and Amory followed slowly, as he had followed her all day for three weeks.

The summer was over, but he had spent the days in watching Eleanor, a graceful, facile Manfred, build herself intellectual and imaginative pyramids while she revelled in the artificialities of the temperamental tens and they wrote poetry at the dinner-table.

When Vanity kissed Vanity, a hundred happy Junes ago, he pondered o'er her breathlessly, and, that all men might ever know, he rhymed her eyes with life and death:

"Thru Time I'll save my love!" he said . . . yet Beauty vanished with his breath, and, with her lovers, she was dead . . .

—Ever his wit and not her eyes, ever his art and not her hair:

"Who'd learn a trick in rhyme, be wise and pause before his sonnet there" . . . So all my words, however true, might sing you to a thousandth June, and no one ever *know* that you were Beauty for an afternoon.

So he wrote one day, when he pondered how coldly we thought of the "Dark Lady of the Sonnets," and how little we remembered her as the great man wanted her remembered. For what Shakespeare *must* have desired, to have been able to write with such divine despair, was that the lady should live . . . and now we have no real interest in her. . . . The irony of it is that if he had cared *more* for the poem than for the lady the sonnet would be only obvious, imitative rhetoric and no one would ever have read it after twenty years. . . .

This was the last night Amory ever saw Eleanor. He was leaving in the morning and they had agreed to take a long farewell trot by the cold moonlight. She wanted to talk, she said—perhaps the last time in her life that she could be rational (she meant pose with comfort). So they had turned into the woods and rode for half an hour with scarcely a word, except when she whispered "Damn!" at a bothersome branch —whispered it as no other girl was ever able to whisper it. Then they started up Harper's Hill, walking their tired horses.

"Good Lord! It's quiet here!" whispered Eleanor; "much more lonesome than the woods."

"I hate woods," Amory said, shuddering. "Any kind of foliage or underbrush at night. Out here it's so broad and easy on the spirit."

"The long slope of a long hill."

"And the cold moon rolling moonlight down it."

"And thee and me, last and most important."

It was quiet that night—the straight road they followed up to the edge of the cliff knew few footsteps at any time. Only an occasional negro cabin, silver-gray in the rock-ribbed moonlight, broke the long line of bare ground; behind lay the black edge of the woods like a dark frosting on white cake, and ahead the sharp, high horizon. It was much colder—so cold that it settled on them and drove all the warm nights from their minds.

"The end of summer," said Eleanor softly. "Listen to the beat of our horses' hoofs—'tump-tump-tump-a-tump.' Have you ever been feverish and had all noises divide into 'tump-tump-tump' until you could swear eternity was divisible into so many tumps? That's the way I feel —old horses go tump-tump. . . . I guess that's the only thing that separates horses and clocks from us. Human beings can't go 'tump-tump-tump' without going crazy."

The breeze freshened and Eleanor pulled her cape around her and shivered.

"Are you very cold?" asked Amory.

"No, I'm thinking about myself—my black old inside self, the real one, with the fundamental honesty that keeps me from being absolutely wicked by making me realize my own sins."

They were riding up close by the cliff and Amory gazed over. Where the fall met the ground a hundred feet below, a black stream made a sharp line, broken by tiny glints in the swift water.

"Rotten, rotten old world," broke out Eleanor suddenly, "and the wretchedest thing of all is me—oh, *why* am I a girl? Why am I not a stupid—? Look at you; you're stupider than I am, not much, but some, and you can lope about and get bored and then lope somewhere else, and you can play around with girls without being involved in meshes of sentiment, and you can do anything and be justified—and here am I with the brains to do everything, yet tied to the sinking ship of future matrimony. If I were born a hundred years from now, well and good, but now what's in store for me—I have to marry, that goes without saying. Who? I'm too bright for most men, and yet I have to descend to their level and let them patronize my intellect in order to get their attention. Every year that I don't marry I've got less chance for a first-class man. At the best I can have my choice from one or two cities and, of course, I have to marry into a dinner-coat.

"Listen," she leaned close again, "I like clever men and good-looking men, and, of course, no one cares more for personality than I do. Oh, just one person in fifty has any glimmer of what sex is. I'm hipped on Freud and all that, but it's rotten that every bit of *real* love in the world is ninety-nine per cent passion and one little soupçon of jealousy." She finished as suddenly as she began.

"Of course, you're right," Amory agreed. "It's a rather unpleasant overpowering force that's part of the machinery under everything. It's like an actor that lets you see his mechanics! Wait a minute till I think this out. . . ."

He paused and tried to get a metaphor. They had turned the cliff and were riding along the road about fifty feet to the left.

"You see every one's got to have some cloak to throw around it. The mediocre intellects, Plato's second class, use the remnants of romantic chivalry diluted with Victorian sentiment—and we who consider ourselves the intellectuals cover it up by pretending that it's another side of us, has nothing to do with our shining brains; we pretend that the fact that we realize it is really absolving us from being a prey to it. But the truth is that sex is right in the middle of our purest abstractions, so close that it obscures vision. . . . I can kiss you now and will. . . ." He leaned toward her in his saddle, but she drew away.

"I can't—I can't kiss you now—I'm more sensitive."

"You're more stupid then," he declared rather impatiently. "Intellect is no protection from sex any more than convention is . . ."

"What is?" she fired up. "The Catholic Church or the maxims of Confucius?"

Amory looked up, rather taken aback.

"That's your panacea, isn't it?" she cried. "Oh, you're just an old hypocrite, too. Thousands of scowling priests keeping the degenerate Italians and illiterate Irish repentant with gabble-gabble about the sixth and ninth commandments. It's just all cloaks, sentiment and spiritual rouge and panaceas. I'll tell you there *is* no God, not even a definite abstract goodness; so it's all got to be worked out for the individual by the individual here in high white foreheads like mine, and you're too much the prig to admit it." She let go her reins and shook her little fists at the stars.

"If there's a God let him strike me—strike me!"

"Talking about God again after the manner of atheists," Amory said sharply. His materialism, always a thin cloak, was torn to shreds by Eleanor's blasphemy. . . . She knew it and it angered him that she knew it.

"And like most intellectuals who don't find faith convenient," he continued coldly, "like Napoleon and Oscar Wilde and the rest of your type, you'll yell loudly for a priest on your death-bed."

Eleanor drew her horse up sharply and he reined in beside her.

"Will I?" she said in a queer voice that scared him. "Will I?" Watch! *I'm going over the cliff!"* And before he could interfere she had turned and was riding breakneck for the end of the plateau.

He wheeled and started after her, his body like ice, his nerves in a vast clangor. There was no chance of stopping her. The moon was under a cloud and her horse would step blindly over. Then some ten feet from the edge of the cliff she gave a sudden shriek and flung herself sideways—plunged from her horse and, rolling over twice, landed in a pile of brush five feet from the edge. The horse went over with a frantic whinny. In a minute he was by Eleanor's side and saw that her eyes were open.

"Eleanor!" he cried.

She did not answer, but her lips moved and her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Eleanor, are you hurt?"

"No; I don't think so," she said faintly, and then began weeping.

"My horse dead?"

"Good God— Yes!"

"Oh!" she wailed. "I thought I was going over. I didn't know—"

He helped her gently to her feet and boosted her onto his saddle. So they started homeward; Amory walking and she bent forward on the pommel, sobbing bitterly.

"I've got a crazy streak," she faltered, "twice before I've done things like that. When I was eleven mother went—went mad—stark raving crazy. We were in Vienna—"

All the way back she talked haltingly about herself, and Amory's love waned slowly with the moon. At her door they started from habit to kiss good night, but she could not run into his arms, nor were they stretched to meet her as in the week before. For a minute they stood there, hating each other with a bitter sadness. But as Amory had loved himself in Eleanor, so now what he hated was only a mirror. Their poses were strewn about the pale dawn like broken glass. The stars were long gone and there were left only the little sighing gusts of wind and the silences between . . . but naked souls are poor things ever, and soon he turned homeward and let new lights come in with the sun. . . .

NOTE ON FRANK SWINNERTON'S

"NOCTURNE"

Emily and Jenny live with their aged, housebound "Pa" Blanchard in Kennington Park, a poor district in London. Emily, the elder, is the household drudge; Jenny has a job as a milliner. Two men are interested in Jenny: Alf Rylett, a good-natured, dull, local fellow just ripe for marriage; and Keith Redington, captain of a pleasure yacht.

Jenny comes home from work and Emmy accuses her of selfishness. Ashamed, Jenny asks Alf, who is to take her to the theater, to take Emmy instead. But Jenny really doesn't mind, since she is waiting for a message from the more attractive Keith.

FRANK SWINNERTON

Nocturne

Frank Swinnerton, born in London in 1884, pluckily pursued a literary career despite illness in youth, until he achieved fame with *Nocturne* (1917). His early writing was influenced by the somber talent of George Gissing, but Swinnerton's view of mankind has never been morbid. *Nocturne,* an authentic, small masterpiece, is instinct with the life of the run-of-the-mill Londoner; it is recorded without caricature, commentary, or sentimental sympathy. The love affair between Alf and Emily, given in our excerpt, is indeed one of the best-controlled dialogues in recent writing. Following this triumph in naturalism, Swinnerton proceeded to produce some fifteen novels and ten nonfiction works, one of which, *The Georgian Literary Scene,* is a common-sense review of British writing after 1910. He is alarmed by the eccentric, the modern, the experimental; he has the easygoing persuasion that these too will pass. Swinnerton's sturdy qualities, seen at their best in *Nocturne,* have limited his sympathies, and hence his range. But within his range, his writing is sure and perfectly fitted to reveal his people.

AND then, once in the street, he made no scruple about taking Emmy's arm within the crook of his as they moved from the staring whiteness of the theatre lamps out into the calmer moonshine. It was eleven o'clock. The night was fine, and the moon rode high above amid the twinkling stars. When Alf looked at Emmy's face it was transfigured in this beautiful light, and he drew her gently from the direct way back to the little house.

"Don't let's go straight back," he said. "Stroll u'll do us good."

Very readily Emmy obeyed his guidance. Her heart was throbbing; but her brain was clear. He wanted to be with her; and the knowledge of that made Emmy happier than she had been since early childhood.

"It's been lovely," she said, with real warmth of gratitude, looking away from him with shyness.

"Hm," growled Alf, in a voice of some confusion. "Er . . . you don't go much to the theatre, do you?"

"Not much," Emmy agreed. "See, there's Pa. He always looks to me . . ."

"Yes." Alf could not add anything to that for a long time. "Fine night," he presently recorded. "D'you like a walk? I mean . . . I'm very fond of it, a night like this. Mr. Blanchard's all right, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. *She's* there." Emmy could not bring herself to name Jenny to him. Yet her mind was busy thinking of the earlier jar, recomposing the details, recalling the words that had passed. Memory brought tears into her eyes; but she would not allow Alf to see them, and soon she recovered her self-control. It had to be spoken of: the evening could not pass without reference to it; or it would spoil everything. Alf would think of her—he was bound to think of her—as a crying, petulant, jealous woman, to whom he had been merely kind. Patronising, even! Perhaps, even, the remembrance of it would prevent him from coming again to the house. Men like Alf were so funny in that respect. It took so little to displease them, to drive them away altogether. At last she ventured: "It was nice of you to take me."

Alf fidgeted, jerking his head, and looking recklessly about him.

"Not at all," he grumbled. "Not tired, are you?" Emmy reassured him. "What I mean, I'm very glad. . . . Now, look here, Em. May as well have it out. . . ." Emmy's heart gave a bound: she walked mechanically beside him, her head as stiffly held as though the muscles of her neck had been paralysed. "May as well, er . . . have it out," repeated Alf. "That's how I am—I like to be all shipshape from the start. When I came along this evening I *did* mean to ask young Jen to go with me. That was quite as you thought. I never thought you'd, you know, *care* to come with me. I don't know why; but there it is. I never meant to put it like I did . . . in that way . . . to have a fuss and upset anybody. I've . . . I mean, she's been out with me half-a-dozen times; and so I sort of naturally thought of her."

"Of course," agreed Emmy. "Of course."

"But I'm glad you came," Alf said. Something in his honesty, and the brusqueness of his rejoicing, touched Emmy, and healed her first wound—the thought that she might have been unwelcome to him. They went on a little way, more at ease; both ready for the next step in intimacy which was bound to be taken by one of them.

"I thought she might have said something to you—about me not *wanting* to come," Emmy proceeded, tentatively. "Made you think I never wanted to go out."

Alf shook his head. Emmy had there no opening for her resentment.

"No," he said, with stubborn loyalty. "She's always talked very nice about you."

"What does she say?" swiftly demanded Emmy.

"I forget. . . . Saying you had a rough time at home. Saying it was rough on you. That you're one of the best. . . ."

"*She* said that?" gasped Emmy. "It's not like her to say that. Did she really? She's so touchy about me, generally. Sometimes, the way she goes on, anybody'd think I was the miserablest creature in the world, and always on at her about something. I'm not, you know; only she thinks it. Well, I can't help it, can I? If you knew how I have to work in that house, you'd be . . . surprised. I'm always at it. The way the dirt comes in—you'd wonder where it all came from! And see, there's Pa and all. She doesn't take that into account. She gets on all right with him; but she isn't there all day, like I am. That makes a difference, you know. He's used to me. She's more of a change for him."

Alf was cordial in agreement. He was seeing all the difference between the sisters. In his heart there still lingered a sort of cherished enjoyment of Jenny's greater spirit. Secretly it delighted him, like a forbidden joke. He felt that Jenny—for all that he must not, at this moment, mention her name—kept him on the alert all the time, so that he was ever in hazardous pursuit. There was something fascinating in such excitement as she caused him. He never knew what she would do or say next; and while that disturbed and distressed him it also lacerated his vanity and provoked his admiration. He admired Jenny more than he could ever admire Emmy. But he also saw Emmy as different from his old idea of her. He had seen her trembling defiance early in the evening, and that had moved him and made him a little afraid of her; he had also seen her flushed cheeks at the theatre, and Emmy had grown in his eyes suddenly younger. He could not have imagined her so cordial, so youthful, so interested in everything that met her gaze. Finally, he found her quieter, more amenable, more truly wifely than her sister. It was an important point in Alf's eyes. You had to take into account—if you were a man of common sense—relative circumstances. Devil was all very well in courtship; but mischief in a girl became contrariness in a domestic termagant. That was an idea that was very much in Alf's thoughts during this walk, and it lingered there like acquired wisdom.

"Say she's going with a sailor?" he suddenly demanded.

"So she told me. I've never seen him. She doesn't tell lies, though."

"I thought you said she did!"

Emmy flinched: she had forgotten the words spoken in her wild anger, and would have been ashamed to account for them in a moment of greater coolness.

"I mean, if she says he's a sailor, that's true. She told me he was on a ship. I suppose she met him when she was away that time. She's been very funny ever since. Not funny—restless. Anything I've done for her she's made a fuss. I give her a thorough good meal; and oh! there's such a fuss about it. 'Why don't we have ice creams, and merangs, and wine, and grouse, and sturgeon—' "

"Ph! Silly talk!" said Alf, in contemptuous wonder. "I mean to say . . ."

"Oh, well: you know what flighty girls are. He's probably a swankpot. A steward, or something of that sort. I expect he has what's left over, and talks big about it. But she's got ideas like that in her head, and she thinks she's too good for the likes of us. It's too much trouble to her to be pelite these days. I've got the fair sick of it, I can tell you. And then she's always out. . . . *Somebody's* got to be at home, just to look after Pa and keep the fire in. But Jenny—oh dear no! She's no sooner home than she's out again. Can't rest. Says it's stuffy indoors, and off she goes. I don't see her for hours. Well, I don't know . . . but if she doesn't quiet down a bit she'll only be making trouble for herself later on. She can't keep house, you know! She can scrub; but she can't cook so very well, or keep the place nice. She hasn't got the patience. You think she's doing the dusting; and you find her groaning about what she'd do if she was rich. 'Yes,' I tell her; 'it's all very well to do that; but you'd far better be doing something *useful,*' I say. 'Instead of wasting your time on idle fancies.' "

"Very sensible," agreed Alf, completely absorbed in such a discourse.

"She's trying, you know. You can't leave her for a minute. She says I'm stodgy; but I say it's better to be practical than flighty. Don't you think so, Alf?"

"Exackly!" said Alf, in a tone of the gravest assent. "Exackly."

"I mean," pursued Emmy, "you must have a *little* common-sense. But she's been spoilt—she's the youngest. I'm a little older than she is . . . *wiser,* I say; but she won't have it. . . . And Pa's always made a fuss of her. Really, sometimes, you'd have thought she was a boy. Racing about! My word, such a commotion! And then going out to the millinery, and getting among a lot of other girls. You don't know *who* they are—if they're ladies or not. It's not a good influence for her . . ."

"She ought to get out of it," Alf said. To Emmy it was a ghastly moment.

"She'll never give it up," she hurriedly said. "You know, it's in her blood. Off she goes! And they make a fuss of her. She mimics everybody, and they laugh at it—they think it's funny to mimic people who can't help themselves—if they *are* a bit comic. So she goes; and when she does come home Pa's so glad to see a fresh face that he makes a fuss of her, too. And she stuffs him up with all sorts of tales—things that never happened—to keep him quiet. She says it gives him something to think about. . . . Well, I suppose it does. I expect you think I'm very unkind to say such things about my own sister; but really I can't help seeing what's under my nose; and I sometimes get so—you know, worked up, that I don't know how to hold myself. She doesn't understand what it is to be cooped up indoors all day long, like I am; and it never occurs to her to say 'Go along, Em; you run out for a bit.' I have to say to her: 'You be in for a bit, Jen?' and then she p'tends she's always in. And then there's a rumpus. . . ."

Alf was altogether subdued by this account: it had that degree of intimacy which, when one is in a sentimental mood, will always be absorbing. He felt that he really was getting to the bottom of the mystery known to him as Jenny Blanchard. The picture had verisimilitude. He could see Jenny as he listened. He was seeing her with the close and searching eye of a sister, as nearly true, he thought, as any vision could be. Once the thought, "I expect there's another story" came sidling into his head; but it was quickly drowned in further reminiscence from Emmy, so that it was clearly a dying desire that he left for Jenny. Had Jenny been there, to fling her gage into the field, Alf might gapingly have followed her, lost again in admiration of her more sparkling tongue and equipments. But in such circumstances the arraigned party is never present. If Jenny had been there the tale could not have been told. Emmy's virtuous and destructive monologue would not merely have been interrupted: it would have been impossible. Jenny would have done all the talking. The others, all amaze, would have listened with feelings appropriate to each, though with feelings in common unpleasant to be borne.

"I bet there's a rumpus," Alf agreed. "Old Jen's not one to take a blow. She ups and gets in the first one." He couldn't help admiring Jenny, even yet. So he hastened to pretend that he did not admire her; out of a kind of tact. "But of course . . . that's all very well for a bit of sport, but it gets a bit wearisome after a time. I know what you mean. . . ."

"Don't think I've been complaining about her," Emmy said. "I wouldn't. Really, I wouldn't. Only I do think sometimes it's not quite fair that she should have all the fun, and me none of it. I don't want a lot. My tastes are very simple. But when it comes to none at all—well, Alf, what do *you* think?"

"It's a bit thick," admitted Alf. "And that's a fact."

"See, she's always having her own way. Does just what she likes. There's no holding her."

"Wants a man to do that," ruminated Alf, with a half chuckle. "Eh?"

"Well," said Emmy, a little brusquely. "I pity the man who tries it on."

Emmy was not deliberately trying to secure from Alf a proposal of marriage. She was trying to show him the contrast between Jenny and herself, and to readjust the balances as he appeared to have been holding them. She wanted to impress him. She was as innocent of any other intention as any girl could have been. It was jealousy that spoke; not scheme. And she was perfectly sincere in her depreciation of Jenny. She could not understand what it was that made the admiring look come into the faces of those who spoke to Jenny, nor why the unwilling admiration that started into her own heart should ever find a place there. She was baffled by character, and she was engaged in the common task of rearranging life to suit her own temperament.

They had been walking for some little distance now along deserted streets, the moon shining upon them, their steps softly echoing, and Emmy's arm as warm as toast. It was like a real lover's walk, she could not help thinking, half in the shadow and wholly in the stillness of the quiet streets. She felt very contented; and with her long account of Jenny already uttered, and her tough body already reanimated by the walk, Emmy was at leisure to let her mind wander among sweeter things. There was love, for example, to think about; and when she glanced sideways Alf's shoulder seemed such a little distance from her cheek. And his hand was lightly clasping her wrist. A strong hand, was Alf's, with a broad thumb and big capable fingers. She could see it in the moonlight, and she had suddenly an extraordinary longing to press her cheek against the back of Alf's hand. She did not want any silly nonsense, she told herself; and the tears came into her eyes, and her nose seemed pinched and tickling with the cold at the mere idea of any nonsense; but she could not help longing with the most intense longing to press her cheek against the back of Alf's hand. That was all. She wanted nothing more. But that desire thrilled her. She felt that if it might be granted she would be content, altogether happy. She wanted so little!

And as if Alf too had been thinking of somebody nearer to him than Jenny, he began:

"I don't know if you've ever thought at all about me, Em. But your saying what you've done . . . about yourself . . . it's made me think a bit. I'm all on my own now—have been for years; but the way I live isn't good for anyone. It's a fact it's not. I mean to say, my rooms that I've got . . . they're not big enough to swing a cat in; and the way the old girl at my place serves up the meals is a fair knock-out, if you notice things like I do. If I think of her, and then about the way you do things, it gives me the hump. Everything you do's so nice. But with her—the plates have still got bits of yesterday's mustard on them, and all fluffy from the dishcloth . . ."

"Not washed prop'ly." Emmy interestedly remarked; "that's what that is."

"Exackly. And the meat's raw inside. Cooks it too quickly. And when I have a bloater for my breakfast—I'm partial to a bloater—it's black outside, as if it was done in the cinders; and then inside—well, I like them done all through, like any other man. Then I can't get her to get me gammon rashers. She will get these little tiddy rashers, with little white bones in them. Why, while you're cutting them out the bacon gets cold. You may think I'm fussy . . . fiddly with my food. I'm not, really; only I like it . . ."

"Of course you do," Emmy said. "She's not interested, that's what it is. She thinks anything's food; and some people don't mind at all what they eat. They don't notice."

"No. I *do*. If you go to a restaurant you get it different. You get more of it, too. Well, what with one thing and another I've got very fed up with Madame Bucks. It's all dirty and half baked. There's great holes in the carpet of my sitting-room—holes you could put your foot through. And I've done that, as a matter of fact. Put my foot through and nearly gone over. *Should* have done, only for the table. Well, I mean to say . . . you can't help being fed up with it. But she knows where I work, and I know she's hard up; so I don't like to go anywhere else, because if anybody asked me if he should go there, I couldn't honestly recommend him to; and yet, you see how it is, I shouldn't like to leave her in the lurch, if she knew I was just gone somewhere else down the street."

"No," sympathetically agreed Emmy. "I quite see. It's very awkward for you. Though it's no use being too kind-hearted with these people; because they *don't* appreciate it; and if you don't say anything they just go on in the same way, never troubling themselves about you. They think, as long as you don't say anything you're all right; and it's not their place to make any alteration. They're quite satisfied. Look at Jenny and me."

"Is she satisfied?" asked Alf.

"With herself, she is. She's never satisfied with me. She never tries to see it from my point of view."

"No," Alf nodded his head wisely. "That's what it is. They don't." He nodded again.

"Isn't it a lovely night," ventured Emmy. "See the moon over there."

They looked up at the moon and the stars and the unfathomable sky. It took them at once away from the streets and the subject of their talk. Both sighed as they stared upwards, lost in the beauty before them. And when at last their eyes dropped, the street lamps had become so yellow and tawdry that they were like stupid spangles in contrast with the stars. Alf still held Emmy's arm so snugly within his own, and her wrist was within the clasp of his fingers. It was so little a thing to slide his fingers into a firm clasp of her hand, and they drew closer.

"Lovely, eh!" Alf ejaculated, with a further upward lift of his eyes. Emmy sighed again.

"Not like down here," she soberly said.

"No, it's different. Down here's all right, though," Alf assured her. "Don't you think it is?" He gave a rather nervous little half laugh: "Don't you think it is?"

"Grand!" Emmy agreed, with the slightest hint of dryness.

"I say, it was awfully good of you to come to-night," said Alf. "I've . . . you've enjoyed it, haven't you?" He was looking sharply at her, and Emmy's face was illumined. He saw her soft cheeks, her thin, soft little neck; he felt her warm gloved hand within his own. "D'you mind?" he asked, and bent abruptly so that their faces were close together. For a moment, feeling so daring that his breath caught, Alf could not carry out his threat. Then, roughly, he pushed his face against hers, kissing her. Quickly he released Emmy's arm, so that his own might be more protectingly employed; and they stood embraced in the moonlight.

It was only for a minute, for Emmy, with instinctive secrecy, drew away into the shadow. At first Alf did not understand, and thought himself repelled; but Emmy's hands were invitingly raised. The first delight was broken. One more sensitive might have found it hard to recapture; but Alf stepped quickly to her side in the shadow, and they kissed again. He was surprised at her passion. He had not expected it, and the flattery was welcome. He grinned a little in the safe darkness, consciously and even sheepishly, but with eagerness. They were both clumsy and a little trembling, not very practised lovers, but curious and excited. Emmy felt her hat knocked a little sideways upon her head.

It was Emmy who moved first, drawing herself away from him, she knew not why.

"Where you going?" asked Alf, detaining her. "What is it? Too rough, am I?" He could not see Emmy's shaken head, and was for a moment puzzled at the ways of woman—so far from his grasp.

"No," Emmy said. "It's wonderful."

Peering closely, Alf could see her eyes shining.

"D'you think you're fond enough of me, Emmy?" She demurred.

"That's a nice thing to say! As if it was for me to tell you!" she whispered archly back.

"What ought I to say? I'm not . . . mean to say, I don't know how to say things, Emmy. You'll have to put up with my rough ways. Give us a kiss, old sport."

"How many more! You *are* a one!" Emmy was not pliant enough. In her voice there was the faintest touch of—something that was not self-consciousness, that was perhaps a sense of failure. Perhaps she was back again suddenly into her maturity, finding it somehow ridiculous to be kissed and to kiss with such abandon. Alf was not baffled, however. As she withdrew he advanced, so that his knuckle rubbed against the brick wall to which Emmy had retreated.

"I say," he cried sharply. "Here's the wall."

"Hurt yourself?" Emmy quickly caught his hand and raised it, examining the knuckle. The skin might have been roughened; but no blood was drawn. Painfully, exultingly, her dream realised, she pressed her cheek against the back of his hand.

"What's that for?" demanded Alf.

"Nothing. Never you mind. I wanted to do it." Emmy's cheeks were hot as she spoke; but Alf marvelled at the action, and at her confession of such an impulse.

"How long had you . . . wanted to do it?"

"Mind your own business. The idea! Don't you know better than that?" Emmy asked. It made him chuckle delightedly to have such a retort from her. And it stimulated his curiosity.

"I believe you're a bit fond of me," he said. "I don't see why. There's nothing about me to write home about, I shouldn't think. But there it is: love's a wonderful thing."

"Is it?" asked Emma, distantly. Why couldn't he say he loved her? Too proud, was he? Or was he shy? He had only used the word "love" once, and that was in this general sense—as though there *was* such a thing. Emmy was shy of the word, too; but not as shy as that. She was for a moment anxious, because she wanted him to say the word, or some equivalent. If it was not said, she was dependent upon his charity later, and would cry sleeplessly at night for want of sureness of him.

"D'you love me?" she suddenly said. Alf whistled. He seemed for that instant to be quite taken aback by her inquiry. "There's no harm in me asking, I suppose." Into Emmy's voice there came a thread of roughness.

"No harm at all," Alf politely said. "Not at all." He continued to hesitate.

"Well?" Emmy waited, still in his arms, her ears alert.

"We're engaged, aren't we?" Alf muttered shamefacedly. "Erum . . . what sort of ring would you like? I don't say you'll get it . . . and it's too late to go and choose one to-night."

Emmy flushed again: he felt her tremble.

"You *are* in a hurry," she said, too much moved for her archness to take effect.

"Yes, I am." Alf's quick answer was reassuring enough. Emmy's heart was eased. She drew him nearer with her arms about his neck, and they kissed again.

"I wish you'd say you love me," she whispered. "Mean such a lot to me."

"No!" cried Alf incredulously. "Really?"

"Do you?"

"I'll think about it. Do you—me?"

"Yes. I don't mind saying it if you will."

Alf gave a little whistle to himself, half under his breath. He looked carefully to right and left, and up at the house-wall against which they were standing. Nobody seemed to be in danger of making him feel an abject fool by overhearing such a confession as he was invited to make; and yet it was such a terrible matter. He was confronted with a difficulty of difficulties. He looked at Emmy, and knew that she was waiting, entreating him with her shining eyes.

"Er," said Alf, reluctantly and with misgiving. "Er . . . well, I . . . a . . . suppose I do . . ."

Emmy gave a little cry, that was half a smothered laugh of happiness at her triumph. It was not bad! She had made him admit it on the first evening. Later, when she was more at ease, he should be more explicit.

"Well," said Alf, instantly regretting his admission, and inclined to bluster. "Now I suppose you're satisfied?"

"Awfully!" breathed Emmy. "You're a dear good soul. You're splendid, Alf!"

For a few minutes more they remained in that benign, unforgettable shadow; and then, very slowly, with Alf's arm about Emmy's waist, and Emmy's shoulder so confidingly against his breast, they began to return homewards. Both spoke very subduedly, and tried to keep their shoes from too loudly striking the pavement as they walked; and the wandering wind came upon them in glee round every corner and rustled like a busybody among all the consumptive bushes in the front gardens they passed. Sounds carried far. A long way away they heard the tramcars grinding along the main road. But here all was hush, and the beating of two hearts in unison; and to both of them happiness lay ahead. Their aims were similar, in no point jarring or divergent. Both wanted a home, and loving labour, and quiet evenings of pleasant occupation. To both the daily work came with regularity, not as an intrusion or a wrong to manhood and womanhood; it was inevitable, and was regarded as inevitable. Neither Emmy nor Alf ever wondered why they should be working hard when the sun shone and the day was fine. Neither compared the lot accorded by station with an ideal fortune of blessed ease. They were not temperamentally restless. They both thought, with a practical sense that is as convenient as it is generally accepted, "somebody must do the work: may as well be me." No discontent would be theirs. And Alf was a good worker at the bench, a sober and honest man; and Emmy could make a pound go as far as any other woman in Kennington Park. They had before them a faithful future of work in common, of ideals (workaday ideals) in common; and at this instant they were both marvellously content with the immediate outlook. Not for them to change the order of the world.

"I feel it's so suitable," Emmy startlingly said, in a hushed tone, as they walked. "Your . . . you know . . . 'supposing you do' . . . me; and me . . . doing the same for you."

Alf looked solemnly round at her. His Emmy skittish? It was not what he had thought. Still, it diverted him; and he ambled in pursuit.

"Yes," he darkly said. "What do you 'suppose you do' for me?"

"Why, love you," Emmy hurried to explain, trapping herself by speed into the use of the tabooed word. "Didn't you know? Though it seems funny to say it like that. It's so new. I've never dared to . . . you know . . . say it. I mean, we're both of us quiet, and reliable . . . we're not either of us flighty, I mean. That's why I think we suit each other—better than if we'd been different. Not like we are."

"I'm sure we do," Alf said.

"Not like some people. You can't help wondering to yourself however they came to get married. They seem so unlike. Don't they! It's funny. Ah well, love's a wonderful thing—as you say!" She turned archly to him, encouragingly.

"You seem happy," remarked Alf, in a critical tone. But he was not offended; only tingled into desire for her by the strange gleam of merriment crossing her natural seriousness, the jubilant note of happy consciousness that the evening's love-making had bred. Alf drew her more closely to his side, increasingly sure that he had done well. She was beginning to intrigue him. With an emotion that startled himself as much as it delighted Emmy, he said thickly in her ear, "D'you love me . . . like this?" . . .

H. T.

As It Was

Edward Thomas (1878-1910), son of an enthusiastic and impractical editorial writer who was a militant agnostic, was reared in a poor and cultivated home. At eighteen he met Helen Noble and three years later they married. H. T., author of *As It Was,* has recounted the story of their life together, with a sensitivity rare in modern letters. Their intellectual interests, their simple joys, their bookish heritage enriching intense personal sentiments, their strange Victorian apprehension of the body, yet their quick discovery of its needs, weave an idyl that has few rivals indeed for candor and charm. Louis Untermeyer has written of Edward Thomas' "slow, sad contemplation of life," of his reflecting "its brave futility." Thomas was killed in World War I. His feeling for the chastened beauties of nature in England transpires through his leisurely poems.

THERE was no definite moment when friendship became love, but a natural merging into love as we became closer friends. At this time we both knew that the friendship between us was the happiest thing in our lives, but we did not regard the future. We were content with the present. But I remember one evening very well. It was in the Spring and nearing David's birthday, March 3rd. We were walking on the Common, very happy, talking of what we had been reading, what doing, what thinking, walking as usual hand in hand. In a space of silence, when thought and emotion went to and fro between us too full even for speech, I felt that wonderful experience of the first stirring of desire, though at this time it seemed half-maternal tenderness for his big, strong body, and his lovely face, and his hand holding mine, which now held his more firmly—mingled with something new and strange that I did not understand. I remember how, with that emotion flooding my being, my heart beat too fast, and my face burned, and I could have fainted with the pain and the joy of it. For it affected me as later I was affected by the first flutter of my baby in my womb.

When we reached the place for good-night I could not let him go as he had always done before, but put my hands round his head and drew it down to mine and kissed his mouth and looked close into his eyes. And he returned my kiss and my look, and then turned to go. But as I turned to go, too, he caught me in his arms and pressed me to him and kissed my mouth and my eyes and my neck; blindly and fiercely he kissed me, and I abandoned myself to him, not responding but just yielding myself to his kisses. When I was in my bed I could not sleep, but lay trembling half with fear, half with wonder, at what I had awakened in him. I had not known that love could be like that—so fierce, so rough, so greedy.

Quite soon after my father's death my position at home became unbearable, and I left home to earn my living as a nursery governess with relatives of friends living at Broadstairs. I do not remember that this parting from David seemed terrible to us at all: we were so happy in our love, and so sure of the future. I do remember that my mother came to see me off, and that she uttered no protest and showed no surprise when David came too. So I left home for the first time in my life.

During the time that I was in Broadstairs, we wrote to each other every day. My letters were written last thing at night in the only time of my own that I had. My work filled my day. I had four young children to bathe, dress, teach (including piano and violin), take out walks, and mend for; and in the evening, when they were in bed, I was expected to play cards with Mr. and Mrs. Hayward on weekdays, and on Sundays listen patiently while Mr. Hayward read aloud to his patient wife and me Cary's translation of Dante. How I used to long impatiently for ten o'clock to strike, for when the hour came we stopped the game or the reading! They went to bed, and I to my room to read over again the letter I had had in the morning, and to write all that my heart and mind were full of. Long letters they were—poured out of my brimming consciousness. We wrote of our daily lives, our thoughts, the books we were reading, and our emotions. We hid nothing of ourselves from each other, and we now looked forward to a life together, when it would be possible. Marriage did not enter into our plans, but just a passionate desire to be one in body as we were in spirit.

Looking back, it seems to me unbelievable that we were so ignorant of sexual love. But we were very ignorant and very innocent.

During this time at Broadstairs I was very happy teaching and playing with the children, with whom I got on very well. Sometimes it happened that between putting the children to bed and dinner-time I was able to slip out on to the beach just below the house, and then it was my delight to run along the sand with the wind in my hair reciting aloud Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" or "Adonais." These and most of Shelley's lyrics and many of Keats's I knew by heart. I remember the exhilaration I felt in those few stolen moments as the strong salty wind snatched the words from my lips, and my breath too, and how I delighted in holding my head high and not lowering it against the speed and the strength of the wind, and how the sound of the wind and of the sea drowned the sound of my voice, and how I felt my own strength and my own place in the motion and strength and sound, for love had given me a consciousness of my own part and significance in the universe I had not dreamt I should ever know.

I had been at Broadstairs for many months and I was so inexperienced and I suppose so well, and so happy with my secret, that it never occurred to me to ask for a holiday, and none was ever offered. The servants and the nurse all had their times off, but I never had any. However, one day David wrote to me that he was coming into Kent to Horsmonden with a friend to fish together. He had been working hard for a Civil Service Examination, and this was to be a little rest before the examination actually took place. I remember when I asked Mrs. Hayward for the day, and told her why, she said, as if so surprised to find I had any life more than her children provided for me, "Oh, I didn't know Phyllis had got a Corydon." So very early one morning I set off. I had to get up at about five, for the journey was a tiresome cross-country one. The cook, who was very kind to me, had left me breakfast laid in the schoolroom, and I remember stealing downstairs so as not to wake anyone and finding to my great joy that the weather promised to be fine. I was wearing mourning for my father, but I hated it and the idea of it. I was too poor to buy a new frock for this great day; so I had made myself a white blouse to wear with my black coat and skirt; and with a big black hat, from which I had taken the black ribbon, putting instead a coloured scarf, I made the best of myself.

I remember only vaguely the journey. What I chiefly remember is the changing smell of the air from the sharp, salty sea air to the soft earthy smell of the green country. When at last I got to Horsmonden, David was there on the platform, and in a moment we were together. We did not speak or kiss, but when we got into the lane and I took in a great deep breath of the delicious air, he said, "O Jenny, love me more than anything that you love," and stopped in the lane, took me in his arms and kissed me, and we leant tremblingly against each other. And I, "I only love other things so much because I love you, dear." Then we walked hand in hand silently, till we came to the top of a little hill, when he ran down, pulling me with him till we were both out of breath and laughing, and we sat down by the roadside among cow parsley and speedwell, till we had got our breath again.

I remember every minute of that day—how we talked and talked as we walked, I not noticing where we were going, but deeply conscious of all the beauty, so strange and so especially lovely to me after the sea and the barren country just inland.

We came at last to a mill pond and to a stick planted in the bank. Here David leant down and pulled up a bottle of lemonade that he had let down into the cool water, and from under a bush he produced a basket full of sandwiches, eggs, cake and fruit, all wrapped up in cool leaves. Not far from the stream was a little copse, and here in the coolness, within sound of the stream, and on a carpet of dog's mercury we sat and ate and talked. I was very hungry after my early rising, and as I sat with David's arm round me, and he was stroking my hair, I soon began to feel sleepy, and when he saw that he made fun of me. It was a hot summer day, and even in the shade of the copse it was hot, and so David unfastened the first few buttons of my blouse to let the air in on my throat, and then with dry leaves he made a place for me to lie, and took off my shoes and stockings. And I lay down in the little place he had made for me, and he sat down by me and, kissing my eyes shut, told me to go to sleep, and soon I was fast asleep. I don't know how long I slept, but I think not long. I was wakened by feeling his face near to mine, and when he saw my eyes opened he kissed my eyes and my mouth and my throat, and took my head between his hands and kissed me again and again, and I, putting my arms round him, drew him to my breast, and so we lay in each other's arms, with our hearts beating wildly together. And yet I can remember no desire for more than this; the new rapture of such an embrace contented us utterly. Then we walked through meadows and woods, and through a beautiful park, where I first learnt to distinguish trees. I remember the lime trees there and the beech, and it seems strange now that there was ever a time when I could not recognize the fine-textured skinlike bark, and the set of the trunk and branches like human limbs, and the beautiful curve that the leafy branches make, like a hand opened for giving.

For tea we made a fire and boiled a kettle. It was the first time we had had a whole day together; the first time we had eaten out of doors together; picnics had been very rare treats in my towny childhood, and this seemed to me the height of happiness. My surprise and joy and excitement in it all were as wonderful to David as the whole adventure was to me.

At dusk I went. He saw me off in the train, and that day ended, and we did not see each other again for many months.

During this time David was working for his examination, but very half-heartedly, for he hated the idea of an office life. He had very much wanted to go to Oxford, but the idea was not encouraged by his parents, partly on account of the expense and partly because his father thought that university life would encourage David in his desire to earn his living by writing, which his father well knew would never lead to a fortune, while fame never entered his mind as a possibility. My father's influence had, of course, been on the side of a literary career, and so David's work for the higher branch of the Civil Service was very much against the grain. About this time his first book was published. He had, during his long walks at all times of the year, kept a minute diary of natural events—birds'-nesting, flowers opening, and descriptions of the sky, and clouds and atmosphere, and all sorts of observations made from day to day. This diary he offered on my father's advice to a firm which accepted it. I shall never forget my pride and joy when my copy of the book arrived, and how, in spite of my shyness in speaking to my employers of my own affairs, I rushed up to Mrs. Hayward to show her the book written by my lover and dedicated to my father. Mrs. Hayward admired my father's work, and the incident led to my telling her about David, and after that I had an interested and sympathetic friend in her.

Soon after this I left Broadstairs. My mother said she wanted me at home, and I did stay at home with her for a little while; but the old antagonism sprang up and I could not endure it for long. I very soon got another post as governess with a Mr. and Mrs. Scott, so that I should not be dependent on her.

She tried again to make me give up David, and forbade me to see him; so he could not come to the house. I lived at home, paying mother for my keep. Each evening David and I met, generally on Wandsworth Common, where afar off I would recognize him by his long swinging stride, even though with my short sight I could distinguish nothing else about him. Sometimes on these evenings he would just walk with me as far as my gate, but sometimes we would go to Wimbledon Common. It was on one of these summer evenings we had been talking of Richard Jefferies and his love for the human body. We had just read his essay, "Nature in the Louvre" and his description of the "Venus Accroupi," which he had admired so much. We were sitting in the undergrowth of a little copse in a remote part of the common. David had said that he had never seen a woman's body, and I do not remember quite how it came about, but I quite naturally and simply, without any feeling of shyness, knelt up in our secret bower and undid my clothes, and let them fall about my knees so that to the knees I was naked. I knew my body was pretty: my breasts were firm and round and neither too small nor too large, and my neck and shoulders made a pleasant line, and my arms were rounded and white, and though my hips were small, the line of the waist was lovely. I was proud of my body, and took the most innocent pleasure in its lines and health and strength. So we knelt in the grass and dead leaves of the copse opposite to each other, he silent and I laughing with joy to feel the air on my skin, and to see his enraptured gaze. For as he knelt he gazed wonderstruck and almost adoring, quite still, quite silent, looking now and then into my eyes with serious ecstatic look, his eyes full of tenderness and love, searching mine for any sign of regret or shyness. He did not touch me, but just knelt there letting his eyes take their fill of the beauty that was filling his soul with delight. When, without a word, I lifted my clothes about me, he helping me, he only then said, "Jenny, I did not know there was such beauty."

He told me as we walked home that no statue or picture of a nude woman had ever given him a true idea, and that it was a far more beautiful thing than he had thought. For though he loved the Greek statues, it seemed to him that my body was far lovelier. But that was only because a warm and living thing has beauty which a stone representation of the most perfect body can never have.

We were still very ignorant of sex, and only knew in a vague way through the reading of poetry how the human sexual act was performed. I remember very well with what joy I realized that his head would be on my breast, and I would enfold him in my arms.

After that, often when we were in remote places, I undressed and lay in the long grass, often beside the infant Wandle, then still an unpolluted stream. I had always from childhood had a love of feeling the air and sun on my body, and now—to be able often to have that experience and added to it the joy of my lover's delight—my heart was full indeed. He did not undress—at this time being shy—because he said his body would look so ugly beside mine, but he used to lie by me with one arm supporting his head while he read to me, the other over me, his hand wandering over my body as he read till it knew the curves as well as his eyes.

Desire had become more conscious and definite, and often in my breast I would experience a pleasurable pain of longing for I knew not what; I loved to feel his hand caressing me. After such a time he would help me to dress, kissing me as he did so, and I half-ashamed of his too great admiration, and wishing I was indeed all that he thought I was—wishing that I had perfect sight, wishing that my hair was not so straight and my nose was straighter, wishing that I could match his intellect and spirit, wishing that I had more to give him, and longing to give him all. But in spite of all that I knew to be imperfect in me I was utterly happy in his love, and hoped that in his heart he created beauty where none was, out of his love for me.

During these stolen hours we sometimes used to go to his home and read aloud, and sometimes we would go into town to the British Museum or the National Gallery, with Ruskin dictating our taste sometimes, and we finding it for ourselves too. Sometimes we would haunt Booksellers' Row—that queer little back street that used to lie behind the Strand—and spend a shilling or two on a second-hand copy of some book we wanted, or having saved up would buy a new volume of Ruskin in a good edition, of Shelley or Keats. Often we had no money, and could only turn the books over, and if we saw one we wanted hope that it would be there next time we came. Sometimes we would walk all the way home, along the Embankment and over Battersea Bridge and home through Clapham Junction. Or we would walk to Hampstead and look at Keats's house, and walk on the heath where David would be sure to find some unexpected wild flower, or hear a bird he did not think to hear there, or notice some beautiful effect of clouds or of smoke against the blue sky. All of this was a new aspect of life to me; for my eye readily caught the beauty of a group of red roofs, and the iron work of an old entrance gate, or the bend of a street of tall dignified houses, but nature was a sealed book to me until David taught me to see with new eyes and hear with new ears. And often I used to escape from home in the evening and go for little walks with him to fields and lanes whose existence so near home I had not dreamed of, and we would talk of life, and books, and love, and nature, and ourselves, and sometimes there was no need for talk—silence satisfied us more. . . .

We had often spoken of our life together, and had made great plans for the education of our children. We hated the thought of a legal contract. We felt our love was all the bond that there ought to be, and that if that failed it was immoral to be bound together. We wanted our union to be free and spontaneous. We had no idea when it should take place, but the thought of our approaching separation heightened our desire to be united in body as we were in heart and spirit.

My twentieth birthday drew near, and I was to have a whole holiday, which David and I were to spend on our favourite Wimbledon Common. We were to picnic there for lunch and tea, and go home to a birthday dinner in the evening. It was July and glorious weather. I had made myself a very pretty white frock, embroidered in flame-coloured silk. I wore a shady hat trimmed with the same colour. It suited me, and I know I looked as pretty as it was possible for me to look. I remember Mr. Scott's saying as I went out, "Why, Jenny, you look like a bride going to meet her bridegroom," and I remember blushing and feeling a great wave of passionate joy surging up in me, and I could hardly help laughing back at him, "I am, I am!" I was to bring the lunch, and David the tea, and I bought fruit and sandwiches and biscuits and some of our favourite Gruyère cheese and half a bottle of wine.

We met in the horrid, dark tunnel at Clapham Junction Station. He was there waiting for me, so tall, so distinguished from other men, dressed as always with a sort of carelessness that was not at all untidy, but just easy and individual. He was in his person scrupulously careful, and his large hands, which he used so well in all sorts of work, were always well kept. No lover could have pleased the eye more, no girl have been prouder of her man than I of mine, and the wonder of his loving me never left me. Our hearts were beating so, and our joy so intense, we could not speak, but just in that crowded place pressed each other's hands and walked side by side.

It did not take us long to get to the Common. In the solitude there we walked hand in hand, or David with his arm round my waist, and I with my hand over his hand, whose pressure under my breast made my whole body tender with desire. Our souls spreading their wings enfolded us in such dreamlike happiness that nothing disturbed our calm and our utter satisfaction. We talked as we sauntered along of what I should do while he was at Oxford, of our life together when he left, of my longing for children, of his ambitions in literature; and in this talk as in many others there was often hinted that deep spiritual unrest, which as yet we did not recognize, much less realize how it was to overshadow so much of his life and mine. All the beauty of the earth, the grass, the flaming gorse, the lark's song, the high cloudlets, the sweet air laden with the honey smell of gorse, seemed to be a part of our love. We could not speak of it, but as we stood to watch a bumble-bee make the gorse flower deliver its secret to him, he standing a little behind me, with his hands over my breasts, drew me to him and kissed me where my hair grew soft and curly under my ear. So I leaned smiling up at him, and he solemnly looking down at me, his eyes half-closed, his lovely mouth trembling from the kiss. So on, walking with hips moving together, laughing because of my short step and his long one. He picked a little bunch of flowers in the grass, white clover, yellow bedstraw and milkwort, and then remembered he had a birthday present for me. It was a brooch made of gold wire, twisted into a Celtic pattern, and when I had put my arms round his neck and kissed him for it, he pinned the flowers into the opening of my dress, which first he opened a little more to kiss the warm, soft swell of my breast, and while he kissed me I pressed his head yet further down into the warmth and sweetness there.

So we walked on into the remote part of the Common among the trees, until we came to a beautiful little pool, where moorhens and coots lived in the reeds, and where water voles dipped out of their holes in the low bank into the water, making a sound like cream being stirred. Here we sat and paddled our feet in the water and ate our lunch. We were so quiet that the timid water creatures grew bold and birds skimmed over the water, and a flaming dragon-fly darted in the air round and round us, as if weaving us in a web of rainbow colours. As we sat, David read to me some of the old ballads, "Edom O'Gordon" and "Chevy Chase" and "Sir Patrick Spens," he leaning against a beech tree and I leaning in the crook of his arm and shoulder, listening to his deep, clear voice, so quiet, so vibrating, so tender. I was caught up into heaven; all beauty, all love, all content was mine. Life gave me all it had to give. As I lay there in the bend of his arm, in the silence that the splash of the voles, and the song of the lark, and the sound of his voice did not disturb, the beating of his heart under my cheek lulled me to sleep, and my eyes were only opened by his kisses. He kissed my eyes, and my funny nose and my mouth and neck and my hands and feet. But I laughed at his serious kisses and pushed him away, and before he knew what I meant to do I had run away and hidden in a thicket of hazel and beech, and crouched down in the dry leaves. I heard his step rustling in the leaves, and I waited, trembling half with fear of his finding me, and half afraid I had hidden myself too well. But he came upon me before I knew he was near, and caught me up in his arms and carried me further and further into the little copse. I lay inert in his arms, conscious of nothing but his beating heart. Soon he came to a little glade in the copse, leafy and mossy and sunny, and putting me down, knelt in front of me and undid my hair, but finding it fell over my face he picked a trail of white bryony and made a fillet of it to keep my hair back. Then, keeping his eyes fixed so tenderly and seriously and passionately on mine, he undid my dress and took my arms out of the sleeves, and unfastened my underclothes, and slipped the shoulder-straps over my arms, so that I was naked to the waist, with my clothes lying round me. Then I held out my hands to him—for he was standing now, and he raised me to my feet, so that my clothes slid down in a ring. I stepped out of them on to the soft moss and dry leaves, and he kissed me and laid me down on the moss, and I lay with my eyes closed, hearing his voice speaking some passionate name. And I opened my eyes and saw him standing there and said "Come," and drew him to my breast. . . .

NOTE ON GEOFFREY DENNIS'

"DECLARATION OF LOVE"

In April 1925, Yorick Lee, a Briton established in Berlin, writes to Miss Susanna Lloyd in Paris. These two English people had met in 1920 when they were both attached to the British Occupation Administration in Cologne. During an amorous trip to Vienna, he poured confessions onto her: their intimacy chilled. On the fateful night of January 4, 1924, she inferred that she might not love him and he accepted this fate. In August 1924, she entered his room and they burst into tears as their loves were revealed to each other.

Yorick recounts the story of their vicissitudes in his first letter, which ends in a declaration of friendship but is quizzical on love. She replies with an assurance of devotion. Both letters amusingly follow the style of the British Foreign Office. In his second letter he proposes marriage; he convinces, she accepts. The correspondence takes a month. The letters are a charming parody on the elaborate reasonings, disguises, and involutions of statesmen. Their psychic masquerade covers rich intuitions; and it is this aspect which serves as the basis of the following selections.

GEOFFREY DENNIS

Declaration of Love

Geoffrey Dennis (b. 1892), a miracle of learning and invention, has his champions (such as Clifton Fadiman), but they have failed to convince the world. An Oxford man winning first class honors in modern history, a captain in World War I, stationed with the army of occupation in Cologne, Dennis turned to the British Civil Service and placed third in all Britain. He became affiliated with the League of Nations in Geneva, was its chief editor and head of its multiple and varied documentary services. He is thus at the point of vantage to know "all that goes on in our time." Despite these attainments (or possibly because of them), Dennis' view of man's dilemmas is spiritual and his fictional resources are unexpected. His first novel, *Mary Lee,* studied the impact of religion on a young girl; but he is best known for his *Declaration of Love* (1927), a series of letters between a sensitive, overlearned, self-conscious analyzer, but a man incandescent with emotion; and a young woman, more mundane but at last illuminated, though within limits. It is the most delightful exposition of "intellectualist love" that we have.

[FIRST LETTER]

SOME find joy in the world visible; Nature is fair and a friend. Nature, I say, is an enemy. The sun would burn me to death if he had but the chance, the cold air freeze me, and the sea swallow me up. The animals are against us; the plants against us, or indifferent. Richard Jefferies says somewhere that if the whole human race were to perish tonight, the earth would not care. Think you that, for a trifle of a few million dead insects upon her, she would be stayed in her course round the sun? All the visible earth gives to those to whom it gives anything is what they have already given to it; it returns the beauty and memoried sadness with which they have first endowed it. On our plane, only we ourselves are real, and Nature is only real through us. Walking along the Linden yesterday afternoon, I saw in a swift moment of trance that the young spring trees were not real but shadows, mourning shadows. For me, there is no real world but people, and no part of them real but their tormented souls.

There only is truth to be found; and love, if there is love.

Twice a light shone into my soul.

First, in younger days, when I apprehended God, and for fugitive moments of rapture came near to Him, for a failing second lost my piteous separate soul, and merged, Jordan water around me, in trembling and glory into Him. I perceive Him no longer; these mocking false moments of "union with the Infinite" have left me never to return.

Years later I thought that in human love I had attained the Infinite, and that the Infinite was Good. Forgive these childish capitals: no words will recreate or picture it. I gave my heart so utterly unto another that there was no longer any self; I had given all to the other, and so I was become nothing, and lived in a heaven of nothingness. In a few seconds the glory faded, my Self returned to my body, the walls of the cottage room (one of the five cottages of Wasdale) shifted again into place, and I was once more "alive," being dead.

Human love as a way out has now long since faded from my beliefs; not altogether from my hopes. Though in my brain I know it cannot be, in some stubborn dunce-corner of my heart lives a hope that the miracle may yet reappear and transport me and the loved one to the happiness of eternal death.

That hope has hindered my seizing all the best normal prospects of contentment I have encountered; is hindering and will hinder. It has vetoed all this-world happiness that others have offered me, and perhaps vetoed their happiness too. It has vetoed you.

But like some others who have no hope and who know with hardly an hour's respite that all is vanity, I like my vanity to be full vain, and in most moods I strike out, like any saner man, for the good things of the material world. I know that any and all of my earthly preferences—a career in politics or scholarship, literary delight and success, material security and comfort—are illusions; but illusions I choose rather than the illusion of their absence or of their opposites. It is vanity of vanities, but I will have it.

Side by side with madness, I have good brains, middle-class shrewdness, English obstinacy: an at least average equipment to help me in my fight for the Bauble.

My other chief human desire is for children. I feel it in every fibre of my soul, and in every limb. I know this desire is a denial of my whole creedless creed: to set going new suffering fragments of the universe (with Father's foes, and Father's fears) is a crime so fundamental that I stand often aghast at the self within me that would commit it. But this self is stronger; with atavistic savagery he thrusts my conscience aside, tramples on my pity, and leaves me with the father-instinct dominant over all others, and the me that would make new victims for the Terror triumphant—ah, sentimentally triumphant —over the me that would save myself and all others from It.

I want life to stream out of me for ever.

The self that sneers at self points out that if I, a man so afear'd of personal immortality, yet desire this, the reason is at bottom cowardice. It is a desire to make with my body souls such as must share immortality with me. Worldly judgment also mocks at my desire, and tells him how much more we love our children than ever they us. But arguments change not instincts, and my selfish love for my unborn children is stronger than myself and than life. And than death.

Blinding terror of the universe, disillusion over this world; desire for success, fame, comfort; the hopes of a family man. In short, an average human being. One of the two thousand million.

I have been straight and spoken with no reticence whatever; I have withheld nothing. Tonight I am staring wide awake, some new light is near to burst in at the window, and I see myself as I am. As I am. No one can hate myself as I do, with all my vanity and inward pollution and self-love and endless tricks. I would shout myself down, take myself by the neck and strangle myself, smash the clock of my brain if I could. Before I went on I wanted you to see me as I see myself. This evil hateful creature that I am. This piteous lost creature that I am. I have lived with despair daily, and that from a child. What happiness I have had I shall be punished for, I know, getting double for all my joy as for all my sins. There is no rebellion in me against my fate; I am the universe, and against whom should the universe rebel? There is in me no courage. There is in me no consistency. Sometimes I believe again in Christ Jesus upon the Cross, and fling myself down on my face before Him, perceiving that all the grey palace of fear and unbelief I have created is but a mirage to tempt me from His side. Sometimes I believe again in Love.

Here at last to the bearing of this tirade on the problem of you and me. Love in the sense I just now described it is what I want, what against hope I hope for. The highest and deepest affection, even when combined with intellectual companionship and with physical attraction and with friendship serene, is as nothing in comparison; and, regarding it as an opposite, I spurn it always because looking for the other. In other fields I see no such inevitable alternatives. For example, because my soul's chief desire is annihilation, and the annihilation of all created things, I do not therefore rest from my worldly daft ambitions: career, literature, money, power. For I do not see one as an alternative, substitute, mockery of the other. They are distinct. One is the Everything which I shall never attain, the other childish Vanity which I might just as well attain. But love with a small l is the mocking step-sister of Love, and I feel and fear that she might cheat me of Her. This is all folly, but I cannot change.

Again, the normal consummation of small-l love would be marriage. But if then Love appeared?

So the one I spurn, and the other comes not.

There is another trouble. The one Wasdale glimpse of the universe-devouring passion I had was in the eyes of a man. Sex was not in it, no more than in the Love of God. Yet the fleshly habitation of his soul was male, and this, as I have always seen, has made things harder.

In two ways. It has subconsciously made me less ready to receive Love, in his longed-for second coming, from a woman. Of my surface self the opposite of course is true: I *want* it to be a woman. But in moments of mystical understanding, when the selves shift and riot, then the vision of Love that I see, half anthropomorphic, since even in those wildest moments I am only half away from the flesh, is (as also the vision of God, as also the vision of Annihilation) the vision of a man. And as the surface self is relatively not strong in me, what "I" want—a woman to love—is made harder to attain.

Second, this vision of Love as a male face accentuates the warfare between the two emotions; the other, little l, being wholly a womanly visualisation.

Because in that one Paradise-moment God's chosen vessel was a man, therefore both love and Love as I seek them have for all my life been harder of seeking.

Then Sex. You know my uneventful record. I belong to the chaster half of mankind. In all my life, and I am thirty-three, the grand total of women who have figured in it, including ones that many bright lads, I think, would deem it most vaunting exaggeration so to include —including one I never kissed, scarcely spoke to—is four. Germany, France, Israel; and you, green England. These were your four lands.

But because neither my affections nor my appetites have been blunted by a thousand anonymous contacts, by the feminine loot of cities, I am not therefore a naiver Yorick for the woman who would love me or be loved. You'd do better with our friend Norton, with his "Four hundred and two different ladies: over three thousand separate times." I have seen his book, and their names and addresses. There's naiveness! He is an infant compared to me. He has loved too much and too easily to know anything about love. For the fewer one's affections, the sharper, deeper, and more wounding they are; the rarer one's relationships, the more exacting one's spiritual and voluptuous demands.

I'm fairly normal. I'm not effeminate. But I'm not much of a male brute: no strong silent man, no sheikh, no Ethel M. Devil of a chap. I like a girl to be comradely, reasonably boyish and womanly both, and in all things about as active and about as passive, as bold and as bashful as myself. A woman must be my sex equal; or then what?

I have never been with a harlot; of brothels I am the world's worst client. If all men were even as pharisee I, the bread (and not only the bread) would be taken out of five million women's mouths. Marshal an instant before your eyes that host of the diseased and the rejected, rotting away for the sins of their fathers, their brothers and their little sons. Then listen to certain humbugs we both of us know prating of justice and progress, and the new City of Heaven they would build down here on earth, doubtless with red lamp quarter all complete, and—making the half-world safe for democracy—crime-proof medical inspection once an hour.

Safe or perilous, paid ladies are not for me. Nor, though they occasionally amuse me in talk, have I any of the -isms of the pseudo-scientific books: sadism, masochism, voyism, fetishism, and all the other lavatory-laboratory horrors. I *think* sex rarely more than once a day, and maybe not one per cent of my waking time.

The only deep-bitten emotion that could affect my happiness with a girl or hers with me is, again, my friendship with my own kind which began in my second year at King's, and resulted in an idealization of men at the expense of women far more dangerous than mere physical perversity, and which only shifted to uneasy second place when my Third Lady (Israel) with her charm and her brains, her loveliness and lovingkindness, brought me, if not utterly Love, yet—more wholeheartedly than they—all the other gifts of men, and filled the forefront of my being. . . .

Meantime, in a watertight compartment of my heart, my fondness for you had been growing a good deal more swiftly. Why, I cannot be sure; the fading of my other geographically-near friendships, and the increase in your goodness were perhaps the two chief reasons.

One night, while a self in me was brooding on the children I wanted to give and to be given, and another self dwelling in friendliness, near tenderness, on you, in a sudden second the two fused and flared, and *Why not?* broke from my lips in the night aloud.

I could not sleep. "Why not?", after the tide of the night had turned soon battling through the early grey hours with "Why?", was clamant within me till the morn. All that day and many succeeding days the battle raged; the battle of Pros versus Cons.

Get it clear that the turmoil began in a purely mental way. I, a marriage-seeker, saw that you were a woman—oh strange discovery—and marriageable, and that the thing was a possibility, and a shrewd one. At the moment of wildest "intellectual" excitement at my discovery there was no Love in me, no celestial glamour about you as in the night I saw your face. This you know, but I must say it.

Till I knew the issue, I determined to keep all tidings of the fight from you. I believe I succeeded. I was erratic with you, and there was a tart little show of reciprocity.

Was there about the same time a quite independent change going on within you? Was it at this moment that your liking for me changed into love? Was it such a change that had had power, unbeknown to either of us, to force me to see a self-evident fact?

I had no peace. "Why not?" appearing to be the stronger army, lover of weak causes I threw my conscious self into the support of "Why?"

Pro advanced with his big battalions. High floating over above them as they marched I saw a standard of Victory, garlanded with orange blossoms, white, insolent, aisle-triumphing. Therefore I—both surface I and, so far as I could direct him at odd moments when he peeped through, subconscious I—took sides with and championed Contra, recruiting him new arguments, drilling and heartening his old ones.

The captain of the army was of course that hardest enemy of yours: I-do-not-love-her.

No, my dear, I did not love you.

This longing to give and to beget affection was not of a world with Love. Affection is a thing that, with average luck, a man may hope quite a few times in his life to receive. Love is a thing that, if the grey gods are good to him, once in his life he may be privileged to *give*. I had had my once. Affection can be given or taken, Love can be given only. Love is giving. What a poor thing is being loved. What a rare thing is loving.

My desire of Love I named, in contradistinction to the mere Programme, the Hope. How many hearts has my fancy not fashioned on which I have lavished every treasure of passion and sacrifice! But they were not real hearts, faces, women. That Lady of the Lord I am still seeking, and maybe shall for ever seek.

If I could love her, I would ask no other thing of the woman I loved.

But if Love comes not, and without him I resolve in the end to seek a companionship for the rest of my time down here; in sensible bourgeois English, if I decide to look for a wife—then, being a sensible English bourgeois, I look also for other things, and my famous Programme of Exigencies begins, as our good cousins say, to function. They are alternatives. Either Love *or* as many as possible of the qualifications.

You more or less know these latter, but here once more they are, ranged under two headings: the Contras or qualifications you haven't got, the Pros or those you have. . . .

YORICK LEE.

[SECOND LETTER]

PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

Tuesday midnight.

MY DEAR MISS LLOYD,

I am writing to ask you if you will marry me.

All my doubts and stipulations on the subject of marriage, whether expressed in a general way or aimed directly at yourself, whether announced on some earlier occasion or set forth in my last shameful letter, are to be banished utterly from your mind and soul. They do not exist. They never have existed. I only ask for a straight answer to my straight question, and hope it will be the right one.

I need not speak of my family connections, financial position, or general prospects. You know them as well as I do. I am sorry I have no better to offer you.

Nor need I tell again the tale of my shortcomings as a human being and as a possible husband. I beg you, however, who have no right to beg, to give these your most earnest consideration before sending me your reply; which will, I yet trust, be speedy.

If your answer is No, don't trouble to explain. I shall know how good your reasons are; I shall not pester you to change your mind; I shall have before me, as my life's chief task and brightness, my service as your friend. . . .

Please write at once.

Say nothing to any one until another post has passed between us.

Thank you very much for your letter.

Your affectionate

YORICK LEE.

Postscript.

That is all the letter I meant to write.

Even as I was writing it I began to see that its brevity held a factitious element of melodramatic contrast to the length and tortuousness of its predecessor. This contrast, though tallying with the change in me, was also, I saw, unconsciously designed to give satisfaction to myself, and only to myself. The letter is marred by this blemish.

I am suddenly perceiving too that you must wish, as a woman and as a friend, and to help you in replying, for some account of how I have been brought from my last letter to this one: a thin word-bridge over the glad abyss.

I have been born again.

Where there was darkness before, I can see. Out in the light of day I can see how my long letter was written, and that it was written not at the first possible moment, but at the last. I do not mean that I had deliberately waited till all those things were true to write of them, but rather that I had to mend my pace so as to finish while they should still all be true. My writing hastened the end, and brought on at once the fulfilment of its own untruth; it brought me out of the catchword prison where I had been lying dark and enslaved.

The prison was murky with arguments, ambitions, and desires; those that you know of. Not one of the desires was—if in the darkness my soul could have seen—of my soul really desired, not one of the notions by my brain truly thought out and possessed. Chimerae; catchwords. I was too sluggish and too cowardly to see them for what they were, to win my own destiny by battle, to arise and strike them who hid the light beyond. Catchwords, only catchwords. I did not verily want success, or money, or social advance, or this or that gimcrack prop for happiness. But the evil spirits behind these names or masks kept my soul in shadow, where they made him believe that he wanted them. Can you feel how the catchwords stood against the door of my soul, and pushed him back with dull weight whenever he would go forth to seek the truth? Try weary hours as I might, I could not open the door; they were stronger. My soul cried *I am dying, I am damning,* but could not open the door.

Sometimes darkness fitted as close as a vice. I knew I was tightly held, and repeated gibberish to help myself pretend I was free: Pros and Cons, Fourteen Points, Programme. It was a prison programme.

Each day the catchwords were stronger, and I more abject before them. I might well have died, as so many other children of men have died, their captive in the darkness. I saw how I should look, with my dead body stretched out in the night. My dead body.

Then God Who helps those who help themselves and Who knew all my strivings set me suddenly on my feet, put a pen—a sword—in my hand, and said Slay!

When I had done, and had fought through (and posted) the six-score pages of the Epistle to Susanna, soon, maybe the space of an hour afterwards, out of the long darkness I seemed to awake; first far away, then nearer, the trumpets of light were sounding, and about me it was brighter, and it was as though a great weight had dropped from my heart, and scales had fallen from my eyes. I was glad. I was free. I knew that the evil spirits had said their last say and were routed. My body was lissom around my soul. Within my soul too answered a new warmth and light; luminous gratitude, triumphal tenderness, desire to give you a little of what I owed you, zeal unto wildest sacrifice—with all these my heart was glowing. I loved you. At last I loved you! Now I was soaring high, up, exultant; the shadows were laid low on the ground. I passed through the blackness line, and was bathed in light. Not light that I can see any more than I can see the light of day, but light the condition of seeing, suffused and warm all round me; and it was You. . . .

[THE REPLY]

You yourself shall hear it first:—Sir, I love you. I love you with all my heart and soul and being, you visible and you invisible, and all you have been and all you shall become; you visible, you of the dear eyes and mouth and hair, of the dear body that I love, and the long swinging English stride that corrects and completes the queer, gentle, un-English look of you; you invisible, that I love far more, the you that is Love Himself looking out of your eyes at the Infinite, and sometimes at me; valiant and tortured you, whom I was sent into the world to worship, to cherish, and to protect. Thank God for letting me love you; thank *you.* I pray because of you, I pray for you, I pray to you; I love you.

Forgive me! It is the first love-letter I have ever written.

Oh, the joy of being able to write it. From the beginning of time my heart has been waiting to write it. The glory of being able proudly to acknowledge love, instead of shamefacedly hiding him away. I am trembling, and my pen refuses to write fast enough the words I want it to. Your question is doubly dear. You want me—*you* want *me*—and at last I am free to tell you of my love. This is the dearer of the two. Heaven does not hold more happiness. Joy is all around me: in the lovely summer day, in the cries of the children in the street, in the scents of trees and flowers from the Bois, in the smell of new bread from the boulangerie across the way. And in the sun! Is he kissing you in far Berlin, I wonder, he who for so many days has been hidden behind the clouds, but has now this morning shone forth in his glory? He has always been there, you know, only hidden. He is in my heart.

I send you all my heart, that the morning breeze may carry it far away in through your window at Berlin.

Yorick, how has it happened? . . .

Strangest of all was the night you wrote. In the selfsame moment you said aloud your opening sentence, I dreamed a dream. I was in a room, a lamp-lit German-looking room, alone with you, and you said: "Will you marry me?"

I gave my reply in the dream; you know it. Then I cried out; for a second of heavenly joy my own selves departed and your soul took possession of my body; I was you. I saw your Universe—and now I pity, love, and worship you for evermore.

Yet which way does that make me answer your question, your question that only affects a score or two of years on earth? How, I ask myself, should I reconcile my saying Yes with my knowing the unfairness to you of a marriage with total love on one side only, my side? I can't. All I can do is to put love away. This is his one public appearance; I have made the most of it! It is love's day only. I shan't therefore spoil my first and only love-letter by referring to any of those practical arrangements that you hinted at and that my Yes, if you think it's a Yes, necessitates or sends "bounding forward into glory." When I've heard from you once more, accepting my Yes, if you think it's a Yes, that will be time enough.

If my answer is No, you understand; I love you enough to be able to say it.

Dear friend, I do not blame you for not loving me more. Your God knows that, if He let you, you would. You will never again be burdened with the sorrows of my ever discontented self. Discontented today! I stand aghast face to face with your goodness to me; you have offered me your life.

I have allowed myself to become as miserable as at the beginning I was joyous. Let me go back to the moment when I said "He wants me," and (here and now I say it aloud as I write it) let me say *Goodbye* to "the wildest dream of all." We shall have no place for him on our ship henceforward. Overboard he goes. I've forgotten him already.

Here, dearest heart in the world, dearer than dreams, dearer than the dear love I bear you, is my answer:

I will go with you to Eternity.

SUSANNA.

NOTE ON WYNDHAM LEWIS'S

"TARR"

Frederick Sorbert Tarr, an oversophisticated British artist, who lives in the Montparnasse (artists') quarter of Paris, has established a semi-permanent liaison with Bertha, a German girl, whom he calls "The Lunken." However, Tarr determines to rid himself of what he now regards as a degrading passion, and to accomplish this by soaring above all banal methods of ending an affair. He arrives at Bertha's home, firmly resolved.

WYNDHAM LEWIS

Tarr

WYNDHAM LEWIS, born in 1886, was the most resourceful of the quartet which led the Futurist generation—Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and himself. In 1913 he issued his "Vorticist" manifesto and for years maintained a running fire on all who disagreed with his theories of art. Himself an accomplished graphic artist, Lewis has known Bohemia inwardly, and in *Tarr* (1917) he produced one of the two masterpieces in English about that world (the other is Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood,* page 386). He has followed his own tack in the novel—in his *Childermass,* he is as original as Joyce but more tormented. He has been accused of Fascism, of mere eccentricity; but of his sheer ability and *brio,* there can be no question. He is among the most versatile of writers, having put forth brilliantly his theories on Shakespeare, the Jews, Time, the "Little Man," and from his vantage point in London he has assailed the idols of the tribe, the idols of our time. He is an all-around man: Lewis versus the world in twenty-odd departments of action and art. In the following excerpt, his cerebral humor plays around transient love.

ANY indirectness was out of the question. A "letting her down softly," kissing and leaving in an hour or two, as though things had not changed, that must be eschewed,—oh, yes. The genuine section of her, of which he had a troubled glimpse, mattered, nothing else. He must appeal obstinately to that. Their coming together had been prosecuted on his side with a stupid levity. He would retrieve this in the parting. He wished to do everything most opposite to his previous lazy conduct. He frowned on Humour.

The first skirmish of his comic Armageddon had opened with the advance of his mysterious and "goguenard" "indifference." This dwindled away at the first onset. A new and more powerful thing had taken its place. This was, in Bertha's eyes, a *difference* in Tarr.

"Something has happened; he is *different,"* she said to herself. "He has met somebody else" had been her rapid provisional conclusion.

She suddenly got up without speaking, rather spectrally, she went over to the writing table for her handkerchief. She had not moved an inch or a muscle until quite herself again, dropping steadily down all the scale of feeling to normal. With very matter-of-factness she got up, easily and quietly, making Sorbert a little dizzy.

Her face had all the drama wrung out of it. It was hard, clear and garishly white, like her body.

If he were to have a chance of talking he must clear the air of electricity completely. Else at his first few words storm might return.

Once lunch had swept through the room, things would be better. He would send the strawberries ahead to prepare his way. It was like fattening a lamb for the slaughter. This idea pleased him. Now that he had accepted the existence of a possible higher plane of feeling as between Bertha and himself, he was anxious to avoid display. So he ran the risk of outdoing his former callousness. Tarr was saturated with morbid English shyness, that cannot tolerate passion and its nakedness. This shyness, as he contended, in its need to show its heart, discovers subtleties and refinements of expression, opposites and between shades, unknown to less gauche and delicate people. But if he were hustled out of his shell the anger that co-existed with his modesty was the most spontaneous thing he possessed. Bertha had always left him alone.

He got up, obsequiously reproducing in his own movements and expression her matter-of-factness.

"Well, how about lunch? I'll come and help you with it."

"There's nothing to do. I'll get it."

Bertha had wiped her eyes with the attentiveness a man bestows on his chin after a shave, in little brusque hard strokes. She did not look at Tarr. She arranged her hair in the mirror, then went to the kitchen. For her to be so *perfectly natural* offended him.

The intensity of her past feeling carried her on for about five minutes into ordinary life. Her seriousness was tactful for so long. Then her nature began to give way. It broke up again into fits and starts of self-consciousness. The mind was called in, did its work clumsily as usual. She became her usual self.

Sitting on the stool by the window, in the act of eating, Tarr there in front of her, it was more than ever impossible to be natural. She resented the immediate introduction of lunch in this way. The resentment increased her artificiality.

To counterbalance the acceptance of food, she had to throw more pathos into her face. With haggard resignation she was going on again; doing what was asked of her, partaking of this lunch. She did so with unnecessary conscientiousness. Her strange wave of dignity had let her in this? Almost she must make up for that dignity! Life was confusing her again; it was useless to struggle.

"Aren't these strawberries good? These little hard ones are better than the bigger strawberries. Have some more cream?"

"Thank you." She should have said no. But being greedy in this matter she accepted it, with heavy air of some subtle advantage gained.

"How did the riding lesson go off?" She went to a riding school in the mornings.

"Oh, quite well, thank you. How did *your* lesson go off?" This referred to his exchange of languages with a Russian girl.

"Admirably, thank you."

The Russian girl was a useful feint for her.

"What is the time?" The time? What cheek! He was almost startled.

He took his heavy watch out and presented its face to her ironically.

"Are you in a hurry?" he asked.

"No, I just wondered what the time was. I live so vaguely."

"You are sure you are not in a hurry?"

"Oh, no!"

"I have a confession to make, my dear Bertha." He had not put his watch back in his pocket. She had asked for the watch; he would use it. "I came here just now to test a funny mood—a quite *new* mood. My visit is a sort of trial trip of this mood. It was connected with you. I wanted to find out what it meant, and how it would be affected by your presence."

Bertha looked up with mocking sulky face, a shade of hopeful curiosity.

"It was a feeling of complete indifference as regards yourself!"

He said this solemnly, with the pomp with which a weighty piece of news might be invested by a solicitor in conversation with his client.

"Oh, is *that* all?" The little barbaric effort was met by Bertha scornfully.

"No, that is not all."

Catching at the professional figure his manner had conjured up, he ran his further remarks into that mould. The presence of his watch in his hand had brought some image of the family physician or gouty attorney. It all centred round the watch, and her interest in the time of day.

"I have found that this was only another fraud on my too credulous sensibility." He smiled with professional courtesy. "At sight of you, my mood evaporated. But what I want to talk about is what is left. It would be well to bring our accounts up to date. I'm afraid the reckoning is enormously against me. You have been a criminally indulgent partner—"

He had now got the image down to the more precise form of two partners, perhaps comfortable wine-merchants, going through their books.

"My dear boy, I know that. You needn't trouble to go any further. But why are you going into these calculations, and sums of profit and loss?"

"Because my sentimental finances, if I may use that term, are in a bad state."

"Then they only match your worldly ones."

"In my worldly ones I have no partner," he reminded her.

She cast her eyes about in swoops, full of self-possessed wildness.

"I exonerate you, Sorbert," she said, "you needn't go into details. What is *yours* and what is *mine*. My God! What does it matter? Not much!"

"I know you to be generous—"

"Leave that then! Leave these calculations! All that means *so little* to me! I feel at the end of my strength—au bout de mes forces!" She always heaved this out with much energy. "If you've made up your mind to go—do so, Sorbert. I release you! You owe me nothing. It was all my fault. But spare me a reckoning. I can't stand any more—"

"No, I insist on being responsible. We can't leave things upside down—our books in an endless muddle, our desks open, and just walk away for ever—and perhaps set up shop somewhere else?"

"I do not feel in any mood to 'set up shop somewhere else,' I can assure you!"

The unbusinesslike element in the situation she had allowed to develop for obvious reasons. She now resisted his dishonest attempt to set this right, and benefit first, as he had done, by disorder, and lastly by order.

"We can't, in any case, improve matters by talking. I—I, you needn't fear for me, Sorbert. I can look after myself. Only don't let us wrangle," with appealing gesture and saintily smiling face. "Let us part friends. Let us be worthy of each other."

Bertha always opposed to Tarr's images her Teutonic lyricism, usually repeating the same phrases several times.

This was degenerating into their routine of wrangle. Always confronted by this imperturbable, deaf and blind "generosity," the day would end in the usual senseless "draw." His words still remained unsaid.

"Bertha, listen. Let us, just for fun, throw all this overboard. I mean the cargo of inflated soul-stuff that makes us go statelily, no doubt, but—. Haven't we quarrelled enough, and said these things often enough? Our quarrels have been our undoing. A long chain of little quarrels has bound us down. We should neither of us be here if it hadn't been for them."

Bertha gazed at Tarr half wonderingly. She realized that something out of the ordinary was on foot.

Tarr proceeded.

"I have accepted from you a queer sentimental dialect of life, I should have insisted on your expressing yourself in a more logical and metropolitan speech. Let us drop it. There is no need to talk negre, baby-talk or hybrid drivel from no-man's-land. I don't think we should lead a very pleasant married life—naturally. In the second place, you are not a girl who wants an intrigue, but to marry. I have been playing at fiancé with a certain pleasure in the novelty, but I experience a genuine horror at the possible consequences. I have been playing with you!"

He said this eagerly, as though it were a point in his argument—as it was. He paused; for effect, apparently.

"You, for your part, Bertha, don't do yourself justice when you are acting. I am in the same position. I feel this. My ill-humour occasionally falls in your direction—yours, for its part, falling in mine when I criticise *your* acting. We don't act well together, and that's a fact; though I'm sure we should be smooth enough allies off the boards of love. Your heart, Bertha, is in the right place; ah, ça!—"

"You are too kind!"

"But—but; I will go farther! At the risk of appearing outrageously paradoxical. This heart in question is so much part of your intelligence, too!—"

"Thanks! Thanks!"

"—despite your execrable fatuity as an actress! Your shrewdness and goodness give each other the hand.—But to return to my point. I had always till I met you regarded marriage as a thing beyond all argument *not* for me. I was unusually isolated from this idea; anyway, I had never even reflected what marriage was. You introduced me to marriage! In so doing you are responsible for all our troubles. The approach of this horrible thing, so *surprisingly* pleasant and friendly at nearer sight, caused revulsion of feeling beyond my control, resulting in sudden fiançailles. Like a woman luxuriously fingering some merchant's goods, too dear for her, or not wanted enough for the big price, so I philandered with the idea of marriage."

This simplification put things, merely, in a new callous light. Tarr felt that she must naturally be enjoying too his points. He forgot to direct his exposition in such a way as to hurt her least. This trivial and tortured landscape had a beauty for him he could have explained, where her less developed sense saw nothing but a harrowing reality.

The lunch had had the same effect on him that it was intended to have on his victim; not enough to overthrow his resolution, but enough to relax its form.

As to Bertha, this seemed, in the main, "Sorbert all over." There was nothing new. There was the "difference." But it was the familiar process; he was attempting to convince himself, heartlessly, on her. Whether he would ever manage it was problematic. There was no sign of his being likely to do so more to-day than any other day. She listened; sententiously released him from time to time.

Just as she had seemed strange to him in some way when he came in, seen through his "indifference," so he had appeared a little odd to her. This had wiped off the dulness of habit for a moment. This husband she obstinately wanted had been recognised. She had seized him round the shoulders and clung to him, as though he had been her child that some senseless force were about to snatch.

As to his superstition about marriage—was it not merely restlessness of youth, propaganda of Liberty, that a year or so would see in Limbo? For was he not a "marrying man"? She was sure of it! She had tried not to frighten him, and to keep "Marriage" in the background.

So Tarr's disquisition had no effect except for one thing. When he spoke of *pleasure he derived from idea of marriage,* she wearily pricked up her ears. The conviction that Tarr was a domesticated animal was confirmed from his own lips. The only result of his sortie was to stimulate her always vigilant hope and irony, both, just a little. He had intended to prepare the couch for her despair!

His last words, affirming Marriage to be a game not worth the candle, brought a faint and "weary" smile to her face. She was once more, obviously, "à bout de forces."

"Sorbert; I understand you. Do realise that. There is no necessity for all this rigmarole with me. If you think you shouldn't marry—why, it's quite simple! Don't think that I would force you to marry! Oh, no!" (the training guttural unctuous accent she had in speaking English filled her discourse with natural emphasis) "I always said that you were too young. You need a wife. You've just said yourself about your feeling for marriage. But you are *so* young!" She gazed at him with compassionate, half-smiling moistened look, as though there were something deformed about being *so* young. A way she had was to treat anything that obviously pointed to her as the object of pity, as though it manifestly indicated, on the contrary, *him*. "Yes, Sorbert, you are right," she finished, briskly. "I think it would be *madness* for us to marry!"

A suggestion that their leisurely journey towards marriage was perhaps a mistake, was at once seriously, and with conviction far surpass-ing that he had ventured on, taken up by her. She would immediately call a halt, pitch tents preliminary to turning back. A pause was necessary before beginning the return journey. Next day they would be jogging on again in the same disputed direction.

Tarr now saw at once what had happened. His good words had been lost, all except his confession to a weakness for the matronly blandishments of Matrimony. He had an access of stupid, brief and blatant laughter.

As people have wondered what was at the core of the world, basing their speculations on what deepest things occasionally emerge, with violence, at its holes, so Bertha often conjectured what might be at the heart of Tarr. Laughter was the most apparently central substance that, to her knowledge, had incontrollably appeared. She had often heard "grondements," grumblings, quite literally, and seen unpleasant lights, belonging, she knew, to other categories of matter. But they never broke cover.

At present this gaiety was interpreted as proof that she had been right. There was nothing in what he had said. It had been only one of his bad fits of rebellion.

But laughter Tarr felt was retrogression. Laughter must be given up. He must in some way, for both their sakes, lay at once the foundations of an ending.

For a few minutes he played with the idea of affecting her weapons. Perhaps it was not only impossible to overcome, but even to approach, or to be said to be on the same field with, this peculiar amazon, without such uniformity of engines of attack or defence. Should not he get himself a mask like hers at once, and follow suit with some emphatic sentence? He stared uncertainly at her. Then he sprang to his feet. He intended, as far as he could see beyond this passionate movement (for he must give himself up to the mood, of course), to pace the room. But his violence jerked out of him a shout of laughter. He went stamping about the floor roaring with reluctant mirth. It would not come out properly, too, except the first outburst.

"Ay. That's right! Go on! Go on!" Bertha's patient irony seemed to gibe.

This laughter left him vexed with himself, like a fit of tears. "Humour and pathos are such near twins, that Humour may be exactly described as the most feminine attribute of man, and the only one of which women show hardly any trace! Jokes are like snuff, a slatternly habit," said Tarr to Butcher once, "whereas tragedy (and tears) is like tobacco, much drier and cleaner. Comedy being always the embryo of Tragedy, the directer nature weeps. Women are of course directer than men. But they have not the same resources."

Butcher blinked. He thought of his resources; and remembered his inclination to tears.

Tarr's disgust at this electric rush of sound made him turn it on her. He was now put at a fresh disadvantage. How could he ever succeed in making Bertha believe that a person who laughed immoderately was serious? Under the shadow of this laugh all his ensuing acts or words must toil, discredited in advance.

Desperately ignoring accidents, he went back beyond his first explosion, and attacked its cause—indicting Bertha, more or less, as responsible for the disturbance.

He sat down squarely in front of her, hardly breathed from his paroxysm, getting launched without transition. He hoped, by rapid plunging from one state to another, to take the wind out of the laugh's sails. It should be left towering, spectral, but becalmed, behind.

"I don't know from which side to approach you, Bertha. You frequently complain of my being thoughtless and spoilt. But your uncorked solemnity is far more frivolous than anything I can manage.= Excuse me, of course, for speaking in this way!=Won't you come down from your pedestal just for a few minutes?" And he "sketched," in French idiom, a gesture, as though offering her his hand.

"My dear boy, I feel far from being on any pedestal! There's too little of the pedestal, if anything, about me. Really, Sorbert," (she leant towards him with an abortive movement as though to take his hand) "I *am* your friend; *believe me!"* (Last words very quick, with nod of head and blink of eyes.) "You worry yourself far too much. Don't do so. You are in no way bound to me. If you think we should part—*let us part!"*

The "let us part!" was precipitate, strenuous-Prussian, almost truculent.

Tarr thought:—"Is it cunning, stupidity, disease or what?"

She continued of a sudden, shunting on to another track of generosity:—

"But I agree. Let us be franker. We waste too much time talking, talking. You are different to-day, Sorbert. What is it? If you have met somebody else—"

"If I had I'd tell you. There is besides *nobody else* to meet. You are unique!"

"Someone's been saying something to you—"

"No. I've been saying something to somebody else. But it's the same thing."

With half-incredulous, musing, glimmering stare she drew in her horns.

Tarr meditated. "I should have known that. I am asking her for something that she sees no reason to give up. Next her 'gout'[1] for me, it is the most valuable thing she possesses. It is indissolubly mixed up with the 'gout.' The poor heightened self she laces herself into, is the only consolation for *me* and all the troubles I spring on her. And I ask her brutally to 'come down from her pedestal.' I owe even a good deal to that pedestal, I expect, as regards her 'gout.' This blessed protection Nature has given her, I, a minute or two before leaving her, make a last inept attempt to capture or destroy. Her good sense is contemptuous and indignant. It is only in defense of this ridiculous sentimentality that she has ever shown her teeth. This illusion has enabled her to bear things so long. It now stands ready with Indian impassibility to manœuvre her over the falls or rapids of Parting. The Scientific thing to do, I suppose, my intention being generous, would be to flatter and increase in some way this idea of herself. I should give her some final and extraordinary opportunity of being 'noble.'"

He looked at her a moment, in search of inspiration.

"I must not be too vain. I exaggerate the gravity of the hit. As to my attempted rape:—See how I square up when she shows signs of annexing *my* illusion. We are really the whole time playing a game of grabs and dashes at each other's fairy vestment of Imagination. Only hers makes her very fond of me, whereas mine makes me see anyone but her. Perhaps this is why I have not been more energetic in my prosecution of the game, and have allowed her to remain in her savage semi-naked state of pristine balderdash. Why has she never tried to modify herself in direction of my 'taste'? From not daring to leave this protective fanciful self, while I still kept all *my* weapons? Then her initiative. She does nothing it is the man's place to do. She remains 'woman' as she would say. Only she is so intensely alive in her passivity, so maelstrom-like in her surrender, so cataclysmic in her sacrifice, that very little remains to be done. The man's position is a mere sinecure."

To cover reflection, he set himself to finish lunch. The strawberries were devoured mechanically, with un-hungry itch to clear the plate. He had become just a devouring-machine, restless if any of the little red balls still remained in front of it.

Bertha's eyes sought to carry her out of this Present. But they had broken down, depositing her, so to speak, somewhere halfway down the avenue.

Tarr got up, a released automaton, and walked to the cloth-covered box where he had left his hat and stick. Then he returned in some way dutifully and obediently to the same seat, sat there for a minute, hat on knee. He had gone over and taken it up without thinking. He only realised, once back, what it meant. Nothing was settled, he had so far done more harm than good. The presence of the hat and stick on his knees, however, was like the holding open of the front door already. Anything said with them there, could only be like words said as an after-thought, on the threshold. It was as though, hat on head, he were standing with his hand on the door knob, about to add some trifle to a thing already fixed. He got up, walked back to where he had picked up the hat and stick, placed them as they were before, then returned to the window.

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[1] taste

What should be done now? He seemed to have played all his fifty-two cards. Everything to "be done" looked behind him, not awaiting him at all. That passive pose of Bertha's was not encouraging. It had lately withstood stoically a good deal, was quite ready to absorb still more. There was something almost pugnacious in so much resignation.

But when she looked up at him there was no sign of combat. She appeared stilled to something simple again, by some fluke of a word. For the second time that day she had jumped out of her skin.

Her heart beat in a delicate, exhausted way, her eyelids became moistened underneath, as she turned to her unusual fiancé. They had wandered, she felt, into a drift of silence that hid a distant and unpleasant prospect at the end of it. It seemed suddenly charged with some alarming fancy that she could not grasp. There was something more unusual than her fiancé. The circular storm, in her case, was returning.

"Well, Sorbert?"

"Well. What is it?"

"Why don't you go? I thought you'd gone. It seems so funny to see you standing there. What are you staring at me for?"

"Don't be silly."

She looked down with a wild demureness, her head on one side.

Her mouth felt some distance from her brain. Her voice stood on tip-toe like a dwarf to speak. She became very much impressed by her voice, and was rather afraid to say anything more. Had she fainted? Sorbert was a stranger. The black stubble on his chin and brown neck, appeared like the symptoms of a disease, that repelled her. She noticed something criminal and quick in his eyes. She became nervous, as though she had admitted somebody too trustingly to her rooms. This fancy played on her hysteria, and she really wanted him to go.

"Why don't you go?" she repeated, in a matter-of-fact voice.

Tarr remained silent, seemingly determined not to answer.

Meantime, he looked at her with a doubtful dislike.

What is *love?* he began reasoning. It is either *possession* or a possessive madness. In the case of men and women, it is the obsession of a personality. He had presumably been endowed with the power of awaking love in her. He had something to accuse himself of. He had been *afraid of giving up* or repudiating this particular madness. To give up another person's love is a mild suicide; like a very bad inoculation as compared to the full disease. His tenderness for Bertha was due to her having purloined some part of himself, and covered herself superficially with it as a shield. Her skin at least was Tarr. She had captured a bit of him, and held it as a hostage. She was rapidly transforming herself, too, into a slavish dependency. She worked with all the hypocrisy of a great instinct.

People can wound by loving; the sympathy of this affection is interpenetrative. Love performs its natural miracle, and they become part of us; it is a dismemberment to cast them off. Our own blood flows out after them when they go.

Or love was a malady; it was dangerous to live with those consumed by it. He felt an uneasiness. Might not a wasting and restlessness ensue? It would not, if he caught it, be recognisable as love. Perhaps he had already got it slightly. That might account for his hanging about her. He evidently was suffering from something that came from Bertha.

Everybody, however, all personality, was catching. We all are sicknesses for each other. Such contact as he had with Bertha was particularly risky. Their photographs he had just been looking at displayed an unpleasant solidarity.=Was it necessary to allege "love" at all? The word was superfluous in his case. The fact was before him.

He felt suddenly despondent and afraid of the Future. He had fallen beneath a more immediate infection.

He looked attentively round the room. His memory already ached. She had loved him with all this. She had loved him with the plaster cast of Beethoven, attacked him with the Klingers, ambushed him from the Breton jars, in a funny, superficial, absorbing way. Her madness had muddled everything with his ideal existence. It wasn't like leaving an ordinary room you had spent pleasant hours in and would regret. You would owe nothing to that, and it could not pursue you with images of wrong. This room he was wronging, and left it in a different way. She seemed, too, so humble in it, or through it. The appeal of the *little* again. If he could only escape from *scale*. The price of preoccupation with the large was this perpetual danger from the *little*. He wished he could look coldly on mere littleness, and not want to caress and protect it when it was human. Brutality was no doubt necessary for people like him. Love was too new to him. He was not inoculated enough with love.

He had callously been signing his name to a series of brutalities, then, as though he were sure that when the time came he would have a quite sufficient stock of coldness to meet these debts. Yet he had known from the first that he had not. Eventually he would have to evade them or succumb. The flourishes of the hand and mind had caused Bertha's mute and mournful attitude. She thought she knew him, but was amazed at his ignorance or pretence.

So he had now brought this new element into relief. For the last hour he had been accumulating difficulties, or rather unearthing some new one at every step. Impossible to tackle "en masse," they were all there before him. The thought of "settling everything before he went," now appeared monstrous. He had, anyhow, started these local monsters and demons, fishing them to the light. Each had a different vocal explosiveness or murmur, inveighing unintelligibly against each other. The only thing to be done was to herd them all together and march them away for inspection at leisure.

Sudden herdsman, with the care of a delicate and antediluvian flock; well!=But what was Bertha to be told? Nothing. He would file out silently with his flock, without any horn-blasts or windings such as he customarily affected.

"I am going now," he said at last, getting up.

She looked at him with startled interest.

"You are leaving me, Sorbert?"

"No. At least, now I am going." He stooped down for his hat and cane. "I will come and see you to-morrow or the day after."

Closing the door quietly, with a petty carefulness, he crossed the passage, belittled and guilty. He did not wish to escape this feeling. It would be better to enhance it. For a moment it occurred to him to go back and offer marriage. It was about all he had to offer. He was ashamed of his only gift!=But he did not stop, he opened the front door and went down stairs. Something raw and uncertain he seemed to have built up in the room he had left. How long would it hold together? Again he was acting in secret, his errand and intentions kept to himself. Something followed him like a restless dog.

NOTE ON E. M. FORSTER'S

"HOWARD'S END"

The following selection is taken from the first three chapters of the novel. Helen Schlegel and her sister Margaret live in London on investments left them by their father. They are part German and devotees of culture. The Wilcoxes and the Schlegels are strangely involved for the remainder of the novel.

E. M. FORSTER

Howard's End

Born in England in 1879, E. M. Forster is now recognized as a classic of our time. No one rivals him in portraying the impact of social class on individual behavior or in rendering the effect of social relations (as between imperialist and subject peoples) on the imagery, cadence, and personal contacts of man with man. He is a master of invention, of cumulative effect, of fantasy, of suggestion, and his understanding of the novelist's problems is magisterial—witness his *Aspects of the Novel*! Forster's two most celebrated books are *A Passage to India* (1923), the most damning literary indictment of imperialism, and *Howard's End* (1910), in which the British obsession with class subtly infiltrates every pore of the spiritual bodies of his countrymen. For Forster, love, like all other aspects of experience, is colored and shaped by environment. But he knows the individual; he never uses the evasions of those social novelists for whom environment shapes all. Virtually another E. M. Forster is found in his fantasies, such as *The Celestial Omnibus,* and in his tales of Pan and fauns.

ONE may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister. . . .

"Howards End,
"Friday.

"Dearest Meg,

"I am having a glorious time. I like them all. Mrs. Wilcox, if quieter than in Germany, is sweeter than ever, and I never saw anything like her steady unselfishness, and the best of it is that the others do not take advantage of her. They are the very happiest, jolliest family that you can imagine. I do really feel that we are making friends. The fun of it is that they think me a noodle, and say so—at least, Mr. Wilcox does—and when that happens, and one doesn't mind, it's a pretty sure test, isn't it? He says the most horrid things about women's suffrage so nicely, and when I said I believed in equality he just folded his arms and gave me such a setting down as I've never had. Meg, shall we ever learn to talk less? I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life. I couldn't point to a time when men had been equal, nor even to a time when the wish to be equal had made them happier in other ways. I couldn't say a word. I had just picked up the notion that equality is good from some book—probably from poetry, or you. Anyhow, it's been knocked into pieces, and, like all people who are really strong, Mr. Wilcox did it without hurting me. On the other hand, I laugh at them for catching hay fever. We live like fighting-cocks, and Charles takes us out every day in the motor—a tomb with trees in it, a hermit's house, a wonderful road that was made by the Kings of Mercia—tennis—a cricket match—bridge—and at night we squeeze up in this lovely house. The whole clan's here now—it's like a rabbit warren. Evie is a dear. They want me to stop over Sunday—I suppose it won't matter if I do. Marvellous weather and the view's marvellous—views westward to the high ground. Thank you for your letter. Burn this.

"Your affectionate
"HELEN."

"HOWARDS END,
"Sunday.

"Dearest, dearest Meg,—I do not know what you will say: Paul and I are in love—the younger son who only came here Wednesday."

Margaret glanced at her sister's note and pushed it over the breakfast-table to her aunt. There was a moment's hush, and then the floodgates opened.

"I can tell you nothing, Aunt Juley. I know no more than you do. We met—we only met the father and mother abroad last spring. I know so little that I didn't even know their son's name. It's all so—" She waved her hand and laughed a little.

"In that case it is far too sudden."

"Who knows, Aunt Juley, who knows?"

"But, Margaret dear, I mean we mustn't be unpractical now that we've come to facts. It is too sudden, surely."

"Who knows!"

"But Margaret dear—"

"I'll go for her other letters," said Margaret. "No, I won't, I'll finish my breakfast. In fact, I haven't them. We met the Wilcoxes on an awful expedition that we made from Heidelberg to Speyer. Helen and I had got it into our heads that there was a grand old cathedral at Speyer—the Archbishop of Speyer was one of the seven electors—you know—'Speyer, Maintz, and Köln.' Those three sees once commanded the Rhine Valley and got it the name of Priest Street."

"I still feel quite uneasy about this business, Margaret."

"The train crossed by a bridge of boats, and at first sight it looked quite fine. But oh, in five minutes we had seen the whole thing. The cathedral had been ruined, absolutely ruined, by restoration; not an inch left of the original structure. We wasted a whole day, and came across the Wilcoxes as we were eating our sandwiches in the public gardens. They too, poor things, had been taken in—they were actually stopping at Speyer—and they rather liked Helen insisting that they must fly with us to Heidelberg. As a matter of fact, they did come on next day. We all took some drives together. They knew us well enough to ask Helen to come and see them—at least, I was asked too, but Tibby's illness prevented me, so last Monday she went alone. That's all. You know as much as I do now. It's a young man out the unknown. She was to have come back Saturday, but put off till Monday, perhaps on account of—I don't know."

She broke off, and listened to the sounds of a London morning. Their house was in Wickham Place, and fairly quiet, for a lofty promontory of buildings separated it from the main thoroughfare. One had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence while the waves without were still beating. Though the promontory consisted of flats—expensive, with cavernous entrance halls, full of concierges and palms—it fulfilled its purpose, and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would rise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London.

Mrs. Munt had her own method of interpreting her nieces. She decided that Margaret was a little hysterical, and was trying to gain time by a torrent of talk. Feeling very diplomatic, she lamented the fate of Speyer, and declared that never, never should she be so misguided as to visit it, and added of her own accord that the principles of restoration were ill understood in Germany. "The Germans," she said, "are too thorough, and this is all very well sometimes, but at other times it does not do."

"Exactly," said Margaret; "Germans are too thorough." And her eyes began to shine.

"Of course I regard you Schlegels as English," said Mrs. Munt hastily—"English to the backbone."

Margaret leaned forward and stroked her hand.

"And that reminds me—Helen's letter—"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Juley, I am thinking all right about Helen's letter.

I know—I must go down and see her. I am thinking about her all right. I am meaning to go down."

"But go with some plan," said Mrs. Munt, admitting into her kindly voice a note of exasperation. "Margaret, if I may interfere, don't be taken by surprise. What do you think of the Wilcoxes? Are they our sort? Are they likely people? Could they appreciate Helen, who is to my mind a very special sort of person? Do they care about Literature and Art? That is most important when you come to think of it. Literature and Art. Most important. How old would the son be? She says 'younger son.' Would he be in a position to marry? Is he likely to make Helen happy? Did you gather—"

"I gathered nothing."

They began to talk at once.

"Then in that case—"

"In that case I can make no plans, don't you see."

"On the contrary—"

"I hate plans. I hate lines of action. Helen isn't a baby."

"Then in that case, my dear, why go down?"

Margaret was silent. If her aunt could not see why she must go down, she was not going to tell her. She was not going to say "I love my dear sister; I must be near her at this crisis of her life." The affections are more reticent than the passions, and their expression more subtle. If she herself should ever fall in love with a man, she, like Helen, would proclaim it from the house-tops, but as she only loved a sister she used the voiceless language of sympathy.

"I consider you odd girls," continued Mrs. Munt, "and very wonderful girls, and in many ways far older than your years. But—you won't be offended?—frankly I feel you are not up to this business. It requires an older person. Dear, I have nothing to call me back to Swanage." She spread out her plump arms. "I am all at your disposal. Let me go down to this house whose name I forget instead of you."

"Aunt Juley"—she jumped up and kissed her—"I must, must go to Howards End myself. You don't exactly understand, though I can never thank you properly for offering."

"I do understand," retorted Mrs. Munt, with immense confidence. "I go down in no spirit of interference, but to make inquiries. Inquiries are necessary. Now, I am going to be rude. You would say the wrong thing; to a certainty you would. In your anxiety for Helen's happiness you would offend the whole of these Wilcoxes by asking one of your impetuous questions—not that one minds offending them."

"I shall ask no questions. I have it in Helen's writing that she and a man are in love. There is no question to ask as long as she keeps to that. All the rest isn't worth a straw. A long engagement if you like, but inquiries, questions, plans, lines of action—no, Aunt Juley, no."

Away she hurried, not beautiful, not supremely brilliant, but filled with something that took the place of both qualities—something best described as a profound vivacity, a continual and sincere response to all that she encountered in her path through life.

"If Helen had written the same to me about a shop-assistant or a penniless clerk—"

"Dear Margaret, do come into the library and shut the door. Your good maids are dusting the banisters."

"—or if she had wanted to marry the man who calls for Carter Paterson, I should have said the same." Then, with one of those turns that convinced her aunt that she was not mad really and convinced observers of another type that she was not a barren theorist, she added: "Though in the case of Carter Paterson I should want it to be a very long engagement indeed, I must say."

"I should think so," said Mrs. Munt; "and, indeed, I can scarcely follow you. Now, just imagine if you said anything of that sort to the Wilcoxes. I understand it, but most good people would think you mad. Imagine how disconcerting for Helen! What is wanted is a person who will go slowly, slowly in this business, and see how things are and where they are likely to lead to."

Margaret was down on this.

"But you implied just now that the engagement must be broken off."

"I think probably it must; but slowly."

"Can you break an engagement off slowly?" Her eyes lit up. "What's an engagement made of, do you suppose? I think it's made of some hard stuff, that may snap, but can't break. It is different to the other ties of life. They stretch or bend. They admit of degree. They're different."

"Exactly so. But won't you let me just run down to Howards House, and save you all the discomfort? I will really not interfere, but I do so thoroughly understand the kind of thing you Schlegels want that one quiet look round will be enough for me."

Margaret again thanked her, again kissed her, and then ran upstairs to see her brother.

He was not so well.

The hay fever had worried him a good deal all night. His head ached, his eyes were wet, his mucous membrane, he informed her, was in a most unsatisfactory condition. The only thing that made life worth living was the thought of Walter Savage Landor, from whose

"Imaginary Conversations" she had promised to read at frequent intervals during the day.

It was rather difficult. Something must be done about Helen. She must be assured that it is not a criminal offence to love at first sight. A telegram to this effect would be cold and cryptic, a personal visit seemed each moment more impossible. Now the doctor arrived, and said that Tibby was quite bad. Might it really be best to accept Aunt Juley's kind offer, and to send her down to Howards End with a note?

Certainly Margaret was impulsive. She did swing rapidly from one decision to another. Running downstairs into the library, she cried: "Yes, I have changed my mind; I do wish that you would go."

There was a train from King's Cross at eleven. At half-past ten Tibby, with rare self-effacement, fell asleep, and Margaret was able to drive her aunt to the station.

"You will remember, Aunt Juley, not to be drawn into discussing the engagement. Give my letter to Helen, and say whatever you feel yourself, but do keep clear of the relatives. We have scarcely got their names straight yet, and besides, that sort of thing is so uncivilized and wrong."

"So uncivilized?" queried Mrs. Munt, fearing that she was losing the point of some brilliant remark.

"Oh, I used an affected word. I only meant would you please only talk the thing over with Helen."

"Only with Helen."

"Because—" But it was no moment to expound the personal nature of love. Even Margaret shrank from it, and contented herself with stroking her good aunt's hand, and with meditating, half sensibly and half poetically, on the journey that was about to begin from King's Cross. . . .

To Margaret—I hope that it will not set the reader against her—the station of King's Cross had always suggested Infinity. Its very situation—withdrawn a little behind the facile splendours of St. Pancras—implied a comment on the materialism of life. Those two great arches, colourless, indifferent, shouldering between them an unlovely clock, were fit portals for some eternal adventure, whose issue might be prosperous, but would certainly not be expressed in the ordinary language of prosperity. If you think this ridiculous, remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it; and let me hasten to add that they were in plenty of time for the train; that Mrs. Munt, though she took a second-class ticket, was put by the guard into a first (only two seconds on the train, one smoking and the other babies—one cannot be expected to travel with babies); and that Margaret, on her return to Wickham Place, was confronted with the following telegram:

"All over. Wish I had never written. Tell no one.—HELEN."

But Aunt Juley was gone—gone irrevocably, and no power on earth could stop her.

Most complacently did Mrs. Munt rehearse her mission. Her nieces were independent young women, and it was not often that she was able to help them. Emily's daughters had never been quite like other girls. They had been left motherless when Tibby was born, when Helen was five and Margaret herself but thirteen. It was before the passing of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, so Mrs. Munt could without impropriety offer to go and keep house at Wickham Place. But her brother-in-law, who was peculiar and a German, had referred the question to Margaret, who with the crudity of youth had answered, "No, they could manage much better alone." Five years later Mr. Schlegel had died too, and Mrs. Munt had repeated her offer. Margaret, crude no longer, had been grateful and extremely nice, but the substance of her answer had been the same. "I must not interfere a third time," thought Mrs. Munt. However, of course she did. She learnt, to her horror, that Margaret, now of age, was taking her money out of the old safe investments and putting it into Foreign Things, which always smash. Silence would have been criminal. Her own fortune was invested in Home Rails, and most ardently did she beg her niece to imitate her. "Then we should be together, dear." Margaret, out of politeness, invested a few hundreds in the Nottingham and Derby Railway, and though the Foreign Things did admirably and the Nottingham and Derby declined with the steady dignity of which only Home Rails are capable, Mrs. Munt never ceased to rejoice, and to say, "I did manage that, at all events. When the smash comes poor Margaret will have a nest-egg to fall back upon." This year Helen came of age, and exactly the same thing happened in Helen's case; she also would shift her money out of Consols, but she, too, almost without being pressed, consecrated a fraction of it to the Nottingham and Derby Railway. So far so good, but in social matters their aunt had accomplished nothing. Sooner or later the girls would enter on the process known as throwing themselves away, and if they had delayed hitherto, it was only that they might throw themselves more vehemently in the future. They saw too many people at Wickham Place—unshaven musicians, an actress even, German cousins (one knows what foreigners are), acquaintances picked up at Continental hotels (one knows what they are too). It was interesting, and down at Swanage no one appreciated culture more than Mrs. Munt; but it was dangerous, and disaster was bound to come. How right she was, and how lucky to be on the spot when the disaster came! . . .

The station, like the scenery, like Helen's letters, struck an indeterminate note. Into which country will it lead, England or Suburbia? It was new, it had island platforms and a subway, and the superficial comfort exacted by business men. But it held hints of local life, personal intercourse, as even Mrs. Munt was to discover.

"I want a house," she confided to the ticket boy. "Its name is Howards Lodge. Do you know where it is?"

"Mr. Wilcox!" the boy called.

A young man in front of them turned round.

"She's wanting Howards End."

There was nothing for it but to go forward, though Mrs. Munt was too much agitated even to stare at the stranger. But remembering that there were two brothers, she had the sense to say to him, "Excuse me asking, but are you the younger Mr. Wilcox or the elder?"

"The younger. Can I do anything for you?"

"Oh, well"—she controlled herself with difficulty. "Really. Are you? I—" She moved away from the ticket boy and lowered her voice. "I am Miss Schlegel's aunt. I ought to introduce myself, oughtn't I? My name is Mrs. Munt."

She was conscious that he raised his cap and said quite coolly, "Oh, rather; Miss Schlegel is stopping with us. Did you want to see her?"

"Possibly—"

"I'll call you a cab. No; wait a mo—" He thought. "Our motor's here. I'll run you up in it."

"That is very kind—"

"Not at all, if you'll just wait till they bring out a parcel from the office. This way."

"My niece is not with you by any chance?"

"No; I came over with my father. He has gone on north in your train. You'll see Miss Schlegel at lunch. You're coming up to lunch, I hope?"

"I should like to come *up*," said Mrs. Munt, not committing herself to nourishment until she had studied Helen's lover a little more. He seemed a gentleman, but had so rattled her round that her powers of observation were numbed. She glanced at him stealthily. To a feminine eye there was nothing amiss in the sharp depressions at the corners of his mouth, nor in the rather box-like construction of his forehead. He was dark, clean-shaven and seemed accustomed to command.

"In front or behind? Which do you prefer? It may be windy in front."

"In front if I may; then we can talk."

"But excuse me one moment—I can't think what they're doing with that parcel." He strode into the booking-office, and called with a new voice: "Hi! hi, you there! Are you going to keep me waiting all day? Parcel for Wilcox, Howards End. Just look sharp!" Emerging, he said in quieter tones: "This station's abominably organized; if I had my way, the whole lot of 'em should get the sack. May I help you in?"

"This is very good of you," said Mrs. Munt, as she settled herself into a luxurious cavern of red leather, and suffered her person to be padded with rugs and shawls. She was more civil than she had intended, but really this young man was very kind. Moreover, she was a little afraid of him: his self-possession was extraordinary. "Very good indeed," she repeated, adding: "It is just what I should have wished."

"Very good of you to say so," he replied, with a slight look of surprise, which, like most slight looks, escaped Mrs. Munt's attention. "I was just tooling my father over to catch the down train."

"You see, we heard from Helen this morning."

Young Wilcox was pouring in petrol, starting his engine, and performing other actions with which this story has no concern. The great car began to rock, and the form of Mrs. Munt, trying to explain things, sprang agreeably up and down among the red cushions. "The mater will be very glad to see you," he mumbled. "Hi! I say. Parcel for Howards End. Bring it out. Hi!"

A bearded porter emerged with the parcel in one hand and an entry book in the other. With the gathering whir of the motor these ejaculations mingled: "Sign, must I? Why the —— should I sign after all this bother? Not even got a pencil on you? Remember next time I report you to the station-master. My time's of value, though yours mayn't be. Here"—here being a tip.

"Extremely sorry, Mrs. Munt."

"Not at all, Mr. Wilcox."

"And do you object to going through the village? It is rather a longer spin, but I have one or two commissions."

"I should love going through the village. Naturally I am very anxious to talk things over with you."

As she said this she felt ashamed, for she was disobeying Margaret's instructions. Only disobeying them in the letter, surely. Margaret had only warned her against discussing the incident with outsiders. Surely it was not "uncivilized or wrong" to discuss it with the young man himself, since chance had thrown them together.

A reticent fellow, he made no reply. Mounting by her side, he put on gloves and spectacles, and off they drove, the bearded porter—life is a mysterious business—looking after them with admiration.

The wind was in their faces down the station road, blowing the dust into Mrs. Munt's eyes. But as soon as they turned into the Great

North Road she opened fire. "You can well imagine," she said, "that the news was a great shock to us."

"What news?"

"Mr. Wilcox," she said frankly. "Margaret has told me everything—everything. I have seen Helen's letter."

He could not look her in the face, as his eyes were fixed on his work; he was travelling as quickly as he dared down the High Street. But he inclined his head in her direction, and said, "I beg your pardon; I didn't catch."

"About Helen. Helen, of course. Helen is a very exceptional person—I am sure you will let me say this, feeling towards her as you do—indeed, all the Schlegels are exceptional. I come in no spirit of interference, but it was a great shock."

They drew up opposite a draper's. Without replying, he turned round in his seat, and contemplated the cloud of dust that they had raised in their passage through the village. It was settling again, but not all into the road from which he had taken it. Some of it had percolated through the open windows, some had whitened the roses and gooseberries of the wayside gardens, while a certain proportion had entered the lungs of the villagers. "I wonder when they'll learn wisdom and tar the roads," was his comment. Then a man ran out of the draper's with a roll of oilcloth, and off they went again.

"Margaret could not come herself, on account of poor Tibby, so I am here to represent her and to have a good talk."

"I'm sorry to be so dense," said the young man, again drawing up outside a shop. "But I still haven't quite understood."

"Helen, Mr. Wilcox—my niece and you."

He pushed up his goggles and gazed at her, absolutely bewildered. Horror smote her to the heart, for even she began to suspect that they were at cross-purposes, and that she had commenced her mission by some hideous blunder.

"Miss Schlegel and myself?" he asked, compressing his lips.

"I trust there has been no misunderstanding," quavered Mrs. Munt. "Her letter certainly read that way."

"What way?"

"That you and she—" She paused, then drooped her eyelids.

"I think I catch your meaning," he said stickily. "What an extraordinary mistake!"

"Then you didn't the least—" she stammered, getting blood-red in the face, and wishing she had never been born.

"Scarcely, as I am already engaged to another lady." There was a moment's silence, and then he caught his breath and exploded with, "Oh, good God! Don't tell me it's some silliness of Paul's."

"But you are Paul."

"I'm not."

"Then why did you say so at the station?"

"I said nothing of the sort."

"I beg your pardon, you did."

"I beg your pardon, I did not. My name is Charles."

"Younger" may mean son as opposed to father, or second brother as opposed to first. There is much to be said for either view, and later on they said it. But they had other questions before them now.

"Do you mean to tell me that Paul—"

But she did not like his voice. He sounded as if he was talking to a porter, and, certain that he had deceived her at the station, she too grew angry.

"Do you mean to tell me that Paul and your niece—"

Mrs. Munt—such is human nature—determined that she would champion the lovers. She was not going to be bullied by a severe young man. "Yes, they care for one another very much indeed," she said. "I dare say they will tell you about it by-and-by. We heard this morning."

And Charles clenched his fist and cried, "The idiot, the idiot, the little fool!"

Mrs. Munt tried to divest herself of her rugs. "If that is your attitude, Mr. Wilcox, I prefer to walk."

"I beg you will do no such thing. I'll take you up this moment to the house. Let me tell you the thing's impossible, and must be stopped."

Mrs. Munt did not often lose her temper, and when she did it was only to protect those whom she loved. On this occasion she blazed out. "I quite agree, sir. The thing is impossible, and I will come up and stop it. My niece is a very exceptional person, and I am not inclined to sit still while she throws herself away on those who will not appreciate her."

Charles worked his jaws.

"Considering she has only known your brother since Wednesday, and only met your father and mother at a stray hotel—"

"Could you possibly lower your voice? The shopman will overhear."

"Esprit de classe"—if one may coin the phrase—was strong in Mrs. Munt. She sat quivering while a member of the lower orders deposited a metal funnel, a saucepan, and a garden squirt beside the roll of oilcloth.

"Right behind?"

"Yes, sir." And the lower orders vanished in a cloud of dust.

"I warn you: Paul hasn't a penny; it's useless."

"No need to warn us, Mr. Wilcox, I assure you. The warning is all the other way. My niece has been very foolish, and I shall give her a good scolding and take her back to London with me."

"He has to make his way out in Nigeria. He couldn't think of marrying for years, and when he does it must be a woman who can stand the climate, and is in other ways— Why hasn't he told us? Of course he's ashamed. He knows he's been a fool. And so he has—a damned fool."

She grew furious.

"Whereas Miss Schlegel has lost no time in publishing the news."

"If I were a man, Mr. Wilcox, for that last remark I'd box your ears. You're not fit to clean my niece's boots, to sit in the same room with her, and you dare—you actually dare—I decline to argue with such a person."

"All I know is, she's spread the thing and he hasn't, and my father's away and I—"

"And all that I know is—"

"Might I finish my sentence, please?"

"No."

Charles clenched his teeth and sent the motor swerving all over the lane.

She screamed.

So they played the game of Capping Families, a round of which is always played when love would unite two members of our race. But they played it with unusual vigour, stating in so many words that Schlegels were better than Wilcoxes, Wilcoxes better than Schlegels. They flung decency aside. The man was young, the woman deeply stirred; in both a vein of coarseness was latent. Their quarrel was no more surprising than are most quarrels—inevitable at the time, incredible afterwards. But it was more than usually futile. A few minutes, and they were enlightened. The motor drew up at Howards End, and Helen, looking very pale, ran out to meet her aunt.

"Aunt Juley, I have just had a telegram from Margaret; I—I meant to stop your coming. It isn't—it's over."

The climax was too much for Mrs. Munt. She burst into tears.

"Aunt Juley dear, don't. Don't let them know I've been so silly. It wasn't anything. Do bear up for my sake."

"Paul," cried Charles Wilcox, pulling his gloves off.

"Don't let them know. They are never to know."

"Oh, my darling Helen—"

"Paul! Paul!"

A very young man came out of the house.

"Paul, is there any truth in this?"

"I didn't—I don't—"

"Yes or no, man; plain question, plain answer. Did or didn't Miss Schlegel—"

"Charles dear," said a voice from the garden. "Charles, dear Charles, one doesn't ask plain questions. There aren't such things."

They were all silent. It was Mrs. Wilcox.

She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands. She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshaowed it. One knew that she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her—that wisdom to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy. High born she might not be. But assuredly she cared about her ancestors, and let them help her. When she saw Charles angry, Paul frightened, and Mrs. Munt in tears, she heard her ancestors say, "Separate those human beings who will hurt each other most. The rest can wait." So she did not ask questions. Still less did she pretend that nothing had happened, as a competent society hostess would have done. She said, "Miss Schlegel, would you take your aunt up to your room or to my room, whichever you think best. Paul, do find Evie, and tell her lunch for six, but I'm not sure whether we shall all be downstairs for it." And when they had obeyed her, she turned to her elder son, who still stood in the throbbing stinking car, and smiled at him with tenderness, and without a word, turned away from him towards her flowers.

"Mother," he called, "are you aware that Paul has been playing the fool again?"

"It's all right, dear. They have broken off the engagement."

"Engagement—!"

"They do not love any longer, if you prefer it put that way," said Mrs. Wilcox, stooping down to smell a rose.

NOTE ON H. E. BATES'S

"FAIR STOOD THE WIND FOR FRANCE"

Their plane disabled, five British aviators—Franklin, O'Connor, Sandy, Godwin, and Taylor—come down onto a field in France. A French farm girl, Françoise, rushes to their aid. The surgeon whom she has brought secretly to minister to Franklin, tells him his arm must be amputated.

H. E. BATES

Fair Stood the Wind for France

MORE favored than any other British writer in O'Brien's annual collections of short stories, H. E. Bates made his literary début at the age of twenty-one with a novel, *Two Sisters* (1926). He was encouraged by the celebrated Garnett family and in 1929 and 1931 he issued two sensitive novels, *Catherine Foster* and *Charlotte's Row,* respectively. All three books exhibited his sympathetic study of women in their mute and introspective moods, especially of women lost in family and village life. A student of Chekhov and Stephen Crane, but not their disciple, Bates centers his short stories on field-workers and artisans in small towns. His descriptions of the country and the seasons are strongly personal, pungent, and immediate; and yet he conveys a feeling of timelessness. His accounts of the "little people" and of tragedies in small compass are beautifully rounded and unmistakably English. Bates joined the R. A. F. *Fair Stood the Wind for France* (1944), from which our selection is taken, though somewhat reminiscent of the cinema, tells the story of a British aviator and a French country girl with a vividness as yet rare in novels of World War II.

AFTER she had watched the two English sergeants disappear down the track that wound along the ridge above the vineyard, their shirts too blue and dangerous in the parallel bars of oak shade and late sunlight that cut the track below the young trees, the girl took a few paces down the slope towards the house and then suddenly lay down in the rough grass, burnt brittle by summer on the unshaded part of the slope above the vines. She lay face downwards, her mouth open a little, panting. The heat of the day that had seemed to come down through glass now seemed to reflect back from the earth in a breath of solid dust. She shut her mouth and, putting her hands under her face, let her breath come in heavy gasps that sucked the flesh of her brown wrists. She was lying roughly in the place where Franklin had first stopped to look down at the mill below the vines, and now as she looked downwards and slantwise across her flattened hands she could see the same empty and silent valley, with the mill white between the orchard grass and the corn beyond. She looked down and waited, as he had done, for something to happen. All the time she could feel her heart pounding against the warm earth and the echo of it beating back against her chest. And all the time as she lay there, thinking of the blue and dangerous shirts of the two men who had gone and of what was going to happen in the house below, and watching for something to happen that never did happen, she told herself that she was not afraid. Not very afraid.

She lay there for about twenty minutes, twice turning round on her back to watch the track between the oaks as if she half expected to see the two sergeants coming back, and once very startled by a voice shouting in the fields below. It was only a woman calling a cow somewhere beyond the river, but the sound in the dead calm air seemed to hit her heart, so that she held her hands against it, pressing down the frightened pain. She felt now as Franklin had done, but without knowing it: young and tense on the edge of danger, her finger on the thread that held the world together, and not knowing if or how soon the thread would break. She lay there for a few minutes after the voice had called, still feeling the breath of the hot earth like solid dust against her face, and then suddenly she got up and went down the path, her face firm and calm, as if she had at last made up her mind.

There was no one in the kitchen of the house when she got there, and she did not call. The little air that stirred down by the water had in it the smell of corn. She stood in the kitchen and listened, her head up, but there was no sound from upstairs. A black hat was lying on the table and there was another, brown-gray, on the chair by the door. She knew then that the two doctors had come back. She picked up the hats and hung them on the peg on the kitchen door. Her brown feet were flat in their heelless rubber sandals, so that when she moved she seemed to skim about the floor of the kitchen. The silence was quite strange; it was very living. It seemed to her like the silence before a baby is born. It held the house in a stretched light web that she broke for a moment by opening the cupboard under the big wooden dresser. From the cupboard she fetched down a canvas bag and two sections of a heavy bamboo fishing pole. She carried the bag and the pole in her right hand and as she skimmed out of the kitchen the web of silence closed in on the house behind her, fine and complete again.

Beyond the mill, on the north side, under the wet stones where the sun never reached, there were always small striped worms, almost like small carmine watch-springs coiled in the clay. She spent five minutes getting enough worms to fill the tobacco tin she carried in the bag. Then she went down to the river edge to where a boat, broad and shallow, lay tied up to the jetty, the chain locked to an iron ring in the stone. As she got into the boat and unlocked the chain and then took one of the heavy oars and pushed away from the jetty, she thought once again, but almost for the last time, of the two sergeants. Her fear about them had become a memory. She looked up the slope and thought of the bright blue shirts and then mentally crossed herself, thinking quite simply, "I forgot to give them a blessing. Perhaps that's why I was frightened." She stood up in the boat and pushed the oar hard against the stone, her brown arms tightened, and felt the boat curve away on the stream with its moving buoyancy. "The blessing of God on you now, wherever you are," she thought. "And a little luck too."

The boat was very heavy and sluggish against the stream and as she pulled it against the sun she felt the heat burning the back of her neck and shoulders as it came flat from the west across the water. She pulled hard for about two minutes, beyond the orchard where Franklin had first kissed her and where the apples, from a distance, now looked like glowing russet berries in the sun. On the right bank, as she rowed, big willow trees leaned with flat branches down to the middle surface of the stream, with stretches of water lilies, flowerless now, in the open spaces between. The water was very clear, too clear she thought, in the stiller pools between the lilies, and over it all was the smell of water, warm and thick like the distant smell of the sea after the heat of the day.

She rowed a little farther, until she could no longer see the mill beyond the big bend of the stream, and then tied up the boat on the right bank, under a line of willows. Two hundred yards upstream was an iron bridge built into concrete supports, in a single span on which, in the early days of the occupation, a sentry had waited to halt the farm traffic that never came. Now the Germans had taken him away.

She tied the boat up to the branch of a willow and began to fit together the two sections of the rod. The whole rod was about fourteen feet long. She threaded about thirty feet of line through the rings and then tied it, without a reel, to the thicker end. She had made a float from a goose-quill and she fixed that, with a rather large hook, to the free end of the line. She nicked a worm on the end of the hook and then swung the line, in a low cast, across the stream. When the float stood straight the flow of the stream took it away to the full curve of the line so that it circled down beyond the bows of the boat and back again until it rested just clear of a ring of lily leaves. The girl tightened the line and rested the rod in a rowlock of the boat.

The sun had fallen quite rapidly in the time it had taken her to row up the river, and now the light was falling so that the roots of the willow, now in shadow, were losing their look of scarlet hair. They flowed with the motion of the stream like tawny strands of seaweed, darkening every time the girl looked into the depth of the stream.

She sat there for a long time watching the willow roots and the float and the sun moving away from the water before the fish began to rise downstream beyond the lilies. She sat quite silent, only once moving to take off her sandals and rest her sun-striped feet on the edge of the boat. The blankness of the sunless water seemed to create, in turn, a blankness across her eyes. She could not feel her heart. The water seemed to have made it tranquil too.

When the fish began to rise, ringing the water and even flopping out of it, she moved to the bows of the boat and cast the line farther downstream. In another hour it would be dark. She tried not to think about Franklin. She was not quite sure what was going to happen back in the house. She knew quite well, with two doctors, that the situation was now very serious. She knew quite well how dangerous it was. But she had no thought to bring to it, as if she knew quite well that thought alone could not change it, any more than thought could help her to catch fish. At the back of her mind there was instead a continuous and unsteady flow of prayer. It was continuous because it was made up of her own patience and faith, and unsteady because its words were nothing but emotions. There were no words that could possibly have the strength of her emotions. Her emotions rose out of her body and became transposed into terms of natural prayer before she could guide or stop them.

The tension of her face that was fixed but tranquil broke when the float went down. She saw it disappear below the lily pads with eyes that did not seem to be conscious of looking. She struck light but firm and felt the fish draw the line from her fingers like the gut of a catapult. When she pulled it in it was a perch of about a pound. She laid it on the bottom of the boat and pressed it with her bare knee, covering the back spines, while she took the hook out of its mouth. The hook was really too long and had bitten deeply in, and when she had it free there was a little blood on her hands.

The fish flopped about in the bottom of the boat as she baited the hook and threw it in again. The sun was almost down. She put one of her sandals on the fish and then her foot on the sandal to keep it quiet. The perch would bite fast now. She would be able to go back and tell the two doctors of the new good place. The perch too would be good after the eels which Pierre caught in the trap below the mill and which had begun to sicken her now after months and months of the occupation. She sat immovable, her dark eyes on the float. When it jigged and went down again her eyes did not flicker. She pulled in the line and unhooked the fish, a perch a little larger than the first, the hook coming free of its own accord, so that there was no blood on her hands. Her heart was beating a little faster now because of the excitement of the fish, but her eyes still did not move. They had all the steadfast and wonderful assurance, if anything a little brighter, that Franklin had first seen in the morning sun.

The twilight seemed to come down very rapidly with the next three fish. The doctors will eat two each, she thought. I must have ten. The goose-quill was white, almost luminous, in the oil-green water, and the little wind that stirred the lily leaves had in it the first coolness of the entire day. She would not see much longer now. She waited, watching the float with her dark bright eyes. She waited for about ten minutes, but nothing happened, and finally she shut her eyes and immediately, as it had always done when she was a child, prayer involuntarily slid through her mind: just one more, Holy Mother, just one, not a very big one but big enough, Holy Mother please. Only about half a pound. Just one more, please. Just one. She opened her eyes and looked at the float. Nothing had happened. She shut them again. If I have faith can there he one? I have faith. I have great faith. Let there be just one more. My faith is eternal.

She kept her eyes closed for about a minute longer, and then slowly opened them. Her heart came thumping up into her throat as she saw the float no longer there, and she forgot all about her faith and began to pull in the line. It seemed very heavy and the fish made big swirls in the water, breaking the surface at last. She held the line very tight and swung the fish into the boat. Its spines pricked up like a hedgehog but she held them down with her knee and then began to take the hook out of its mouth. The bait had been gorged and the hook was far down. The fish was about two pounds and in her excitement she was clumsy and pulled too hard on the hook, so that it came away bloody, tearing the lip, the blood running over her hands. And in that moment, as the hook tore the flesh of the fish and the blood spewed scarlet on her brown hands in the twilight, she knew for the first time what they were going to do to Franklin.

She felt very weak and sick as she began to row slowly back downstream. The fish flopped about in the bottom of the boat and she did not trouble to put on her shoes. She rowed with her eyes on the water. They were troubled with new light. It was the first time since Franklin had walked down through the orchard that morning that she had felt anything like terror. She had never been really afraid: only excited. Only very, very excited, so that her excitement was itself an exultation that could not help, in turn, giving her that air of sublime assurance that was sometimes, to Franklin, quite unreal. She had always felt very much as if anything that had happened had been bound to happen. She had always wanted it to happen. She did not understand much about the war, at least about the intricacies of war, but what she understood was very clear and simple. She understood that the war was not finished. She understood that the war could be carried on in France, without arms, and that, by the grace of God, it must be carried on. She was very young but the war had a way of making her feel very old, and sometimes she felt that Franklin had come by the grace of God too.

She felt very old now, her sickness cold and sour, as she pulled the heavy boat downstream. It was almost dark now and the little light on the water was splintered by the boat like delicate glass. As she rowed by the orchard she remembered the moment there with Franklin, under the apple trees. It was a very wonderful moment and it too had seemed inevitable. She had known that it had to happen. And now as she remembered it she was struck by the terror that it would never happen again. It was no longer a simple affair of hiding and escape. There were many people in it now, and soon someone would say too much. Franklin would be taken and in turn, she thought in terror, they will take us out and shoot us. They will take me out and shoot me too and what happened under the apple trees will not even be a memory.

She tried to calm herself as she walked up from the river to the house, carrying the fish with one hand in a basket bag. She carried her shoes and the rod in the other. But she could not even feel calm as she stood still by the door outside the house and listened. There was nothing to hear except the sound of her own heart and the noise of the mill water rushing away in the silence.

After listening for a moment or two she opened the kitchen door and went in. The lamp was burning on the table and the old woman was laying knives and forks on the cloth. The girl did not speak but her eyes flickered a little, for the first time, as she came into the light of the lamp. The doctor from the town, whom she knew better than the doctor from the hospital, was drying his arms on a towel. His face looked gray and tired and he did not speak. She went past him and slid the fish into the sink.

Before she could turn on the tap to wash the fish the doctor from the hospital came downstairs and into the kitchen. He walked straight over to the sink where the girl stood. He was carrying something in a towel. The towel looked like a red and white flag.

"Good fish," he said.

She looked up and was too startled to answer. He too looked gray and tired. His collar was undone and the black tie had been loosened and pulled down. He put the bundle in a chair.

Her terror became wild and fresh as she saw his hands stretch out towards the tap. It spurted with a great ice-cold jet across her mind as the tap itself was turned and loosened the water. She saw the hands and then the arms, up to elbows, wet and bright with moist splashes of blood and then the tap itself bloody as the hands were taken away and finally the water itself turning from purity to broken scarlet as the hands were held there. She watched it all for about half a minute without moving, her eyes never flickering, until the blood and her terror were one as completely as the water and her terror had been.

She put her hands on the edge of the sink at last and clung to it as if she were faintly clinging to the edge of the world.

In the room behind her she vaguely heard the old woman pushing back the bolt of the door. There was no other sound except the sound of running water, and nothing to be seen now, in her eyes, except the blood of the fish and the blood of Franklin mingling and swirling away in the sink together. . . .

On the twelfth day after the operation Franklin walked out of the house for the first time. In the dusk of evening it was safe to come down and walk, for about ten minutes, up and down the roadway between the mill and the house and as far up the slope as the first apple trees. The girl walked with him and took his right arm. The sensation of walking on dry earth was so different from walking in the bedroom that his body seemed to vibrate at every step. His empty sleeve, tucked into his jacket pocket, felt strange too. But the strangest moment was when he stooped down in the orchard to pick up an apple and, without thinking of the balance of his arm, almost fell down. It gave him an odd sensation of being struck a violent blow on his left side, so that his body swiveled round.

After that he walked out every night. It was now late September and each time the dusk seemed to come a little earlier and he was able to walk a little further. There was no break in the weather and in the orchard, after the hot days, the dusk was smoky orange through the trees and he could feel the sweat on the apples as he picked them up out of the grass, greasy and scented and sweet with full ripeness. There were many trees of pears too, big and golden now, bending the long pear branches down so that they swung like ropes of solid yellow bells, and invisible in the grass so that he and the girl trampled them underfoot. He would pick them up and eat them idly as he walked, thinking of orchards in Worcestershire where the pears had been ripe too in the late September weather and he had eaten them often with their summery juicy sweetness running down his chin. Now, though the taste of pears was the same and all the odor of late summer just the same, England seemed far away. All his life there had gone, with the complication of flying, all the life governed by the great dark hangars, the black Wellingtons, the wide gray strips of tarmac and the friendly grass beyond them, smoothed down like combed silk in the winds that blew in across the drome from the sea. It was cut off from him by the nightmare of the operation and he saw it through mists of remembered sickness. It was a life sometimes without faces. He could not remember what people looked like. Sometimes even when he thought of Taylor and Goddy and O'Connor and Sandy he could not remember their faces, and then suddenly, in an unexpected moment, he could remember Sandy's bald ginger head and the effect would startle him into the pain of a simple fact: that something must happen soon and that soon, however one part of him hated it, however complicated and painful it seemed, he would have to go.

On the seventeenth night after the operation he walked up through the orchard to the farthest corner of it where it joined the vineyard on the slope above the river. It was a distance of about two hundred and eighty yards. Now he could walk it quite well. He could even walk it above normal pace, up the slope, without being tired. He had got used too to the feeling of being unbalanced, and now he walked with a short and rather jerky swing of his right arm, like a crab, as if for support he had to clutch and hold the air. His left arm had begun to pain him much more in the night now and he did not sleep much, his eyes pinned back by the sharp stars as he looked at the sky. But it was a good pain; he could feel it grasping the broken sinews of the arm and pulling the tissues with a clean deep ache together; it was a living pain, itching and with its dull violence keeping him awake.

He did not realize how fast he walked until he reached the top of the orchard and leaned against the fence there. The girl leaned there too, smiling and panting a little at the same time.

"You make me run," she said.

"Run?" He was astonished at his own progress. "Did I walk fast?"

"Very fast." She smiled again. "It comes of practising a great deal. We hear you walking in the bedroom."

"Oh no! I'm sorry," he said.

"There is no need to be sorry. We hear you walking up and down, up and down. It's a good sound. Now you can really walk. Quite fast."

She stopped smiling and looked at him, leaning back on the fence, her arms crooked back, horizontally. In the dusk she seemed very serious, her eyes very black and still but looking slightly oblique, a little past him.

"Soon you will need to walk," she said.

"Soon?"

He spoke without thinking. He knew quite well, now, what she meant. He felt the dusk about him still and deep, and he breathed in the heavy smell of it, cool but heavily fragrant still with sun and leaves and the winy juice of fruit fallen and crushed in the grass. He knew quite well, with a feeling of apprehension in which there were misery and excitement, that something had happened now.

"My father has gone to arrange the pass for you," she said.

"Today?"

"He will be back tonight," she said.

Oh God, he thought. He felt the ripeness of the world split by the pain of his own reluctance. He did not want to go, he thought, he did not want to go. After all this, after the planning and the waiting and all his intense scheme of recuperation, he did not want it. He felt the misery of departure come out of the future and felt the foretaste of it, sick and bitter in his mind. He did not want the agony and the loneliness and the complications of being without her.

"When?" he said. "When must I go?"

He took hold of her with his right arm, holding her at the waist, pulling her body forward until the shape of it was clear and firm against him.

"Tomorrow," she said. "Perhaps tomorrow."

It was very sudden. "Tomorrow?" he said.

"Or the next day," she said. "My father will know." She lifted her face and looked at him, very serious and tender. "You will be glad to get back to England."

He did not know whether it was a question from her or not; he only knew that he would not be glad. He did not know what to say to her now, and she said:—

"What will you do when you are in England again?"

"Fly," he said. He spoke without thinking. The decision to fly, determined by the fears that he would never do so again, must have lain already made in his mind. He seemed to pick it out unconsciously. And having expressed it, he knew that somehow, someday, he had to fly again, that it was an essential part of his life, without which living was not complete.

"But the arm?" she said.

"Men have ridden bicycles with one arm," he said. "If there is something you want to do very much you will do it."

"Will you fly the bombers again?" she said.

"I hope so."

"Over here?" She lifted her head a fraction higher, and he saw the faintest gleam of light flash in the dark pupils. He understood what it meant and could not bear it and held her suddenly very close to him. He understood now what it would mean to fly over France again: how infinite darkness or the moonlight with its Alpine distances of crumpled cloth would have for him the complication of additional fears. He saw the irony of flying over France, twice a night, perhaps twice a week, for all the months and perhaps all the years of the rest of the war, and how in the moonlight he would look down and see the glassy line of the rivers, thinking always of this river, and how she herself would look up at every sound of aircraft in the night, thinking it might be he himself flying above her. If we send five thousand bombers across France, every night of the year, he thought, nothing could change the situation. If I go tomorrow, he thought, nothing can alter that one fact. Once I am gone we are a million miles apart. The war splits us apart with infinity.

There was only one thing to do. "Listen," he said. "Listen. Please do something for me."

"I will do anything for you," she said. As she spoke he felt the inside of himself crying, dry and bitter. "I will do anything."

"Then do this," he said. "Before I go tell me the name of the river, the name of the town, and your father's name. So that I shall know and can come back. Will you do that for me? Please."

"Yes. I will."

She spoke very quietly but the words had for him all the depth and solidity of the earth. They had an everlasting permanence that nothing could shake. He could carry them beyond this moment, and beyond any moment of doubt that the future might hold, and take comfort from them.

"And will you tell me where you live?" she said. "So that when the war is over I can write to you."

"Yes," he said.

Suddenly she held him with great desperation, crying bitterly to him: "Don't fly again. Don't fly. I don't want you to fly again."

"It's all right," he said. "I shall be all right."

Jesus, she knows, he thought. He stood stupidly staring across the darkening orchard, through the narrow avenues of trees. The pain of all the things which had troubled him as a pilot and of which he had never spoken to a soul now seemed to stand simply before him. All of his flying life had been in a sense screened round by fear. It had been carefully screened from his mother, from Diana, from his friends; it was screened from them by his behavior, his language, by all the expressions on his face. It was screened even more securely from himself by his own emotions. Yet underneath it all, underneath the pretense which many continuous operations sometimes made very brittle, he had a curious and infinite belief in his own immortality. Other pilots could go and not come back, but never himself. It had not ever seemed possible for him to die. Now, because of his arm, because of the night of confused and bare terror in the bedroom, when pain had ripped the superficial skin from every emotion, it was possible to think of death. Yet he knew, all the same, yet without any reason that he could name, that he still would not die. He had simply become, through pain and the loss of his arm, a more conscious person. Because of the girl, part of himself had come from behind the screen. But behind it all, still, very deep and infinitely secure, lay that absurd and untouchable belief in his own immortality.

She roused him from these few seconds of thinking by saying suddenly: "We shouldn't talk of things that may not happen. It is time to be sensible. My father will be back with the pass for you."

"Yes, it's time to be sensible," he said.

It was awkward to hold her with his one arm and now he turned her body slightly so that his arm was across her breast. He began to kiss her and while he was kissing her he touched first one breast and then the other, holding them with tenderness. It seemed to him that this was, perhaps, not the first but the last moment between them. He pulled the blouse gently away from her shoulders. She moved herself so that first one arm and then the other came clear and until he could feel all the upper part of her shoulders naked and smooth in his hand. Then she turned a little and pressed herself very closely, half sideways, against him, so that her bare shoulder pressed against the stub of his severed arm, so that the pain of it shot up through his body and broke at his lips in a little gasp, making him break away.

"This is not sensible," she said.

"You said you would do anything for me," he said. Down beyond the dark avenues of the orchard there was no longer any light from the sun. His tenderness for her as he touched her breasts was as infinite as the darkness stretching out beyond the plain.

"Yes, I will do anything," she said. . . .

NOTE ON GLENWAY WESCOTT'S

"A GUILTY WOMAN"

For having murdered her lover, Evelyn Crowe, a social worker, was sentenced to six years in prison. At the age of forty-five, she emerges with a pardon, and arrives at the home of her true friend, Martha Colvin, who has been waiting for her. The two middle-aged women are frequently visited by John Bolton, a fishing and hunting companion of Martha's; he is an "old bachelor doctor" who had practically retired. During the long hours of boredom between John's visits, Evelyn is driven to read all about her crime, her trial, and at last, the letters from the man she had murdered. Our selection begins here.

GLENWAY WESCOTT

A Guilty Woman

Born in 1901 in the Wisconsin that his writing has made famous, Glenway Wescott attended the University of Chicago, which he soon abandoned to spend a decade in France. His associations there were largely with the "little magazine" groups, but beginning with *The Apple of the Eye* (1923), his writing assumed qualities that set it apart. His novel, *The Grandmothers,* added stature, but it was the volume of short stories *Good-Bye, Wisconsin* (1928) that proclaimed him to be one of America's supreme stylists. Publishing little since that event, Wescott renewed his reputation in 1945 with a novel of resistance, *Apartment in Athens,* which reached a mass audience. Wescott has been praised for his simplicity of utterance, so like the best folk-speech, his perfect cadences, his caress of Mother Earth, and his inspired transposition of French subtlety to the delineation of American character, motive, and drama. But his central quality lies in his ability to evoke overwhelming sympathy almost at once. In our selection from *Good-Bye, Wisconsin,* Evelyn, a social worker who murdered her lover, has come from prison to her ever-true friend, Martha, to become involved with the man Martha desires.

THE crime had taken ten minutes; these letters stood for more than a year.

"I just thought I'd try old maid's love—see what *that* was like," he had said, just before the end. What it was like . . . Misspelled, indecent, idiotic. "Old maid's love, old maid's love," she cried aloud. She pressed her face against the pages of the magazines, tore at the rug with her nails. Everyone she would ever know had read those letters.

Having come thus far in her thought, she made another discovery. Her mind seemed to open; it was like pages opening of their own accord; love fell into sight. If she went on seeing John Bolton . . .

In her imagination shaken by sobs, dusky with tears, the doctor's face took on all the moving aspects of other faces, the dead man's beauty, the warden's authority; it even borrowed kindness from Martha's. Face flowering in her exhaustion . . . Suddenly the wild dream put her to sleep, and she lay, with her head on the magazines—in which, like any other reader but more than any other, she had found the history of her life, past and future—until it was dark, until Martha, sounding her horn in the lane, came home.

Evelyn sprang to her feet, put back the clippings and the magazines, threw herself on the bed to leave a hollow in it, and went downstairs to tell Martha that she had been taking a nap. If Martha learned what she had seen, what had happened, she would not forgive herself for having kept the clippings lying loosely about. Never, she must never, never by a slip of the tongue . . . Perhaps that was the only thing she would ever have a chance to do out of gratitude.

For two or three weeks keeping the secret was not easy. Thus far she had been saved from shameful, even from regretful, introspection by the hardness of prison life and by the fact that, since nineteen years was a life-sentence, nothing mattered, and lately by the shock of freedom. Now, a free woman but falling in love, she had to look at all her conduct clearly; love was a cruel brilliant light within herself, upon herself, focussed as if by a magnifying glass, burning, fiber by fiber. A personal, portable hell . . .

She pretended to be merely ill. Martha studied her, suspicious of vague sicknesses, and advised her to consult Dr. Bolton. All day long her rough-looking lips were restless with questions. Evelyn, yearning for a confidant, was afraid of them; at the first deft inquiry all the anguish might come out, with the least word she would be doing harm again—she had done enough. She discovered that by not trying to deny to herself her desire to talk to Martha, and putting it off from hour to hour, she could accomplish her end, and by hiding her newly awakened shame, little by little lost sight of it herself.

But she determined not to see the doctor again. The next time he came she stayed in her room. Martha said: "John thinks you don't like him. I don't see how you can help it—he is nearly perfect. Anyway, I didn't notice that you didn't, the other night."

"Oh, but I do, very much. Quite the contrary, I thought he didn't like me. A woman who has shot somebody must be prepared for that."

"Stop saying such things, I tell you," Martha answered, sharply. "I don't know what has possessed you the last few weeks."

So Evelyn persuaded herself that it was Martha who persuaded her to see the doctor. Old and hopeless though she was, the autumn after the first frost, the Indian summer, was like a rustic heaven—the part of heaven in which not all desires have been fulfilled—the forests blushing and rusting, all the hours full of hesitation, of waiting, of hope. John Bolton came often, and at last often when Martha was not there.

He said: "I like you because you can change. You grew old, and now the last few weeks you have been growing younger. You have been a foolish woman and at other times you are wise. I suppose you had strong feelings but sometimes I wonder if you aren't cold all the way through—you think all the time. Then sometimes I notice the fiery way you speak. Perhaps that is because you were a teacher. Or perhaps because you were shut up there so long with only your ideas to see—you do talk of your ideas as if they were people. Now Martha and I have been the same every day for about thirty years."

She said: "I changed too much, one day, in a few minutes. Coming from the prison, as I passed through Belleville—that was where I—that was where it, happened—I looked up and down the station platform, to see if there was anyone I remembered. There was nobody but an old soldier with whiskers. He was looking up and down the platform. His eyes were rather murky. I think I am like him in a way—he must have lost the past by losing his memory, at least the memory of what made him do what he did and he was looking for a future to take its place, to fill the vacancy. No one spoke to him."

"Oh no," he said, "they took you away to prison just at the age when women get old. Your hair is grayer than mine or Martha's, but you seem to me the youngest."

She said: "I am as good for nothing as if I were old. Martha wants me to get back my ambitions, my ideals. Indeed, I don't want to be dependent on her always. But the fact is I feel as if I should never want to lift a hand again as long as I live. You see, modern prisons are arranged for people who commit crime for profit, and out of laziness and cowardice. If hard labor gets to be a habit for them, maybe they will have the patience to earn a living honestly when they get out. This system made me lazy and a coward. For I feel that I did my share under lock and key, I mean of hard work—and I don't know what else but physical labor I should be allowed to do now. Don't forget that in the old days I was paid a salary for my character, my high moral standing. You can imagine how little there is left of that."

"More than you think. There is some kind of superiority about everything you say, everything you do, your eyes looking straight at people, the way you lift your hands without touching anything. You are different."

She said: "I may seem to be, but I haven't been. I know. Because, not long ago, I saw some letters I wrote. As you see, I lose my voice when I try to speak of them. Sometimes I think I mind because they make me like everybody else, because I was proud of the exceptional aspects of my life, because pride is my besetting sin. Sometimes now I decide it would have been better if I had been, from the beginning, more like those letters, like other people, a little vulgar all the time instead of holding it back. Waiting, oh, complacently, for the dam to burst. Disastrous old maid . . ."

"Don't—" he said. "You know, you haven't been living in Wisconsin in late years, not right out in it. Or else you'd have more pride, by contrast. You can't imagine how stagnant we all get. We use the most miserable language and so we can't understand each other. But we are all alike just the same. We are all so countrified and disappointed, although everything succeeds. You must have travelled a lot when you were young. When we get to my age and have plenty of money, we'd go away, but we don't know where to go . . ."

One night they were playing pinochle. Martha had gone to bed. The house cat sat purring on Evelyn's lap; in their hands the cards whispered; they were tired of talking. The out of doors, brought close to them by an uncurtained window, was bluish and cold. She shuffled and dealt. Suddenly John dropped his cards and took her wrists in his hands; her cards fell in disorder; how tired they were of playing!

The table was covered with a piece of buckskin, an entire hide with a bullet-hole under her elbow. The cards were pretty under the warm lamp. The ace of spades, Carmen's death—her sad old eyes hunted for it and failed to find it; without meaning to, he had covered it up. *A dark man will come into your life. I see a long voyage* . . . These were the rulers over this world, the powers: different denominations of power, spotted red and black, shuffled and thrown down under clasped hands; the calm red-yellow busts, bedizened, not smiling, each one with two faces, always right side up, always wrong side up—it did not matter which. She could not think of anything but what she saw, and resolved to have, all her life, a pack of cards spread out where she could see them.

He held her hands for a long time in silence. Then he said, "Evelyn, wouldn't you like to marry me?"

Martha's cat sprang to the floor as she stood up. For no reason they hurried over to the window. He said: "We are both lonely. I can take better care of you than Martha can. I am fifty, you are almost as old. We'll go away. You'll be happier."

"Don't tell me reasons," she interrupted.

"Please. Please, Evelyn."

"Oh, oh, did you think I wouldn't?" she cried. "What am I—"

They had come across the room to the window, that is, to the one-sided, scarred wintry moon. It gazed at her for a long time like some soiled omnipotent face, now weakened by her weeping, now flashing with her emotions, now hidden by John's face . . .

"Will you leave me now?" she asked finally. "I can't understand, with you near, how all is changed."

"You tell Martha," he said. She loved him the more for not being courageous at that moment. He went home, yielding her to her joy.

Her own courage was scarcely sufficient the next afternoon, though she was not aware of all they were doing to their friend. John was not coming until night. She and Martha sat together, well bundled up, in a patch of late-November sunshine, under the stripped arbor. "Martha, I love John. He has asked me to marry him."

Martha wept. She wrung her gloved hands and covered her face with them both.

All the one's hope being flooded away in the flood of the other's tears, all her joy crumpling up . . . "Then," Evelyn muttered, "you yourself, you too—"

"Don't mind me. It's all right. It's wonderful. You won't stay here, will you? It will be all right."

Evelyn spoke sternly. "First, tell me if you love him. You *have* loved him, all the time."

"Oh, of course I loved him. Who could help it? Fifteen years . . ."

Evelyn said: "Then I won't. I can't. It's very simple. I will go away. You shouldn't have let it happen. If I weren't too old I'd take my miserable life now. Please, please forgive me now, Martha. And help me to get away soon."

"Nothing of the sort. You're going to marry John. That's that. And say no more about it. And you're going to live happily ever after."

"How odious! Wicked I've been, never as wicked as that. You came to my rescue twice. Oh, my shame! . . . Compare me with yourself. The murderess turned thief—"

"Stop! Evelyn, stop at once!"

They sat for a moment gazing at each other like strangers.

"Now I must explain," Martha began again, "why I've been kind, since that worries you. The misery of other people makes me miserable. I do what I can to stop it—for my own sake. That's all. I've had good luck, within limits. Because I've been prudent. Well, I hate prudence. But if I manage to do something for others, you, for instance—why, I don't have to be ashamed of myself. Pride is my besetting sin. That you must understand, that I am a thoroughly selfish woman."

Evelyn was thinking: two kinds of selfishness, Martha's and her own; Martha's was not likely to be rewarded on this earth. As for herself, she did harm unintentionally—but thoroughly—and when it was over, aroused sympathy and secured help. Which meant that her disastrous emotions were not so foolish as they seemed. She made use of them, as of a kind of unconscious cunning, to get her own way. She was the more feminine of the two; therefore hers was the winning side, the winning side. Nothing succeeds like success—odious. "No, no, no, no! This one thing I can't, won't do . . ."

Martha paid no attention to her. "Now about John. You know, at first he wouldn't come to see you. On account of—oh, well, you can imagine. I made him come. In order not to have to respect him less. Then it occurred to me that this might happen; I thought of what you told me about the warden. That's why I left you alone together—you see I always have my reasons—in order not to have to reproach myself for the jealousy I did feel. I hoped you were both too old to think of marrying, and then we'd stay here together, all three of us. Now of course you will travel. I always thought you should go abroad where even you couldn't expect anyone to remember the past. I thought of lending you money to go but, I couldn't afford to; the crops have been poor for several years and pork isn't worth anything any more—"

"I can't sit here and listen to you talk like this," Evelyn cried. "You are proving how much better you are than I am. Oh, better, better, I should think so—and you can't keep from making me feel it. You might have spared me that. I am ashamed enough. I can't endure it. Stop it for the love of God!"

"Evelyn," her friend said quietly, "we are too old to quarrel about a man."

Evelyn held her breath. This was the realm of violence—she recognized it, she had been there before. The territory of murder. And having come to it again, there was nothing there to drive her mad. There was nothing there at all, except pity and timidity; a wistful look on the woman-farmer's freckled face, as if she were asking a favor, a little of a certain kind of irony or mockery to hide the look. Life had no curse left. . . .

Patiently, Martha began again. "I can't remember when I didn't love him, and in all that time he never once asked me to marry him. He asked for—and received—other things. Oh yes, he is fond of me, I know, I know. But there was nothing to keep us apart; there was also nothing to bring us closer together, nothing to provoke him. It was always quite all right as it was. For him, I mean. And since I always supposed this might happen some day, I realize that when you told me I behaved disgracefully."

Not by the words but by the tone in which they were spoken, the emotion with which they were heard, Evelyn knew that she could not be frustrated or defeated, could not defeat herself, even if she wanted to—could not want to. In the old days she had not known her rivals, unless that was one whom she had seen in the train, years after, coming away from the prison. This then was the rivalry of women, this, invincible love. Blessed are the hopeless and the guilty, for they . . .

Suddenly, to her amazement, she found herself rejoicing at the superiority of her life over her friend's: her friend's life in which there was every personal virtue, every lone self-sufficient virtue, somehow cut off, somehow condemned to renunciation; her own life grasping and surreptitious, without kindness, without wisdom, but wedded to an old destiny, putty in its lover's-hands, vapor in its arms. Old, old as they all were. Her thought ran on to her own ends: John—an indulged and optimistic man—could she make him as happy being what she was—but never more an old maid.

"I bore him to death," Martha said. "I know it. I have always bored him. You don't. That is your reward for what happened to you, for having been—all that. He will live to be an old man now and be young to the end. He wouldn't have but for you; I know him, and shall bless you every day of my life. And I don't need him, I assure you I don't need him. You do. I've always been too proud to need anybody—it serves me right."

Evelyn tried to protest once more, half-heartedly. "I deserve nothing. I am a spoiled woman. Let me give him up, make me, let me be good at last."

"Listen to me. It doesn't matter whether you deserve it or not. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. And if I took him away from you I shouldn't be keeping him, for I've never had him—and what would you do? I don't want to be responsible, I don't want to interfere with what is one of the advantages of your destiny, I refuse to. We can't all of us do what we like."

Indeed, there was no choice at this parting of the ways. The unfortunate one of the two could not choose more misfortune, nor the fortunate one happiness. Evelyn could not expiate the evil she had done; Martha could not profit by her noble lifetime.

It was late and growing colder. The two aging women kissed one another. The scenery of their hearts was exactly like that of nature in the dusk—a violet hollow well-swept of clouds, the ashes of the year making the air strong, trodden autumnal paths leading infinitely apart and away. Their cheeks were very cold because they had been wet.

It was time to go indoors and make haste in the kitchen; whatever the circumstances, men had to be fed. John kept them waiting, and when at last they heard him in the lane, so much did Evelyn admire her friend that she was afraid and held her breath. He might have regretted the choice he had made between them; he might be coming to tell them that he had changed his mind.

BOOK III: *Marriage*

D. H. LAWRENCE

The Rainbow

THE fourth son of a Nottinghamshire coal miner, D. H. Lawrence (1884-1930) issued his first book at twenty-six: he was recognized by the discerning as a genius. He sought happiness in many lands: but he was almost continuously in spiritual ferment, and always confident of his message. *Sons and Lovers* (1913) renders the simple heartfelt relations of workingclass mother and son, the surge of youth and the breaking away. It plumbed new depths, told new truths; and to his dying day, Lawrence rejected middle- and upper-class attitudes, holding their views to be borrowed, their visions unreal. In *The Rainbow* (1915), a blaze of beauty and purity, he expresses in natural ecstasy, rapt symbol, and prose realism the life of the couple: this is the great marriage song. Sexual love was a splendid, shimmering manifestation of the hidden springs: Lawrence was not impressed with Man's logic veneer. He felt that man and woman needed something greater than each other for inner peace, and in *Women in Love* (written 1916) he sought to find the reality of sexual love. The first writer in English on this central theme, he died still searching, still tortured.

CORN harvest came on. One evening they walked out through the farm buildings at nightfall. A large gold moon hung heavily to the grey horizon, trees hovered tall, standing back in the dusk, waiting. Anna and the young man went on noiselessly by the hedge, along where the farm-carts had made dark ruts in the grass. They came through a gate into a wide open field where still much light seemed to spread against their faces. In the under-shadow the sheaves lay on the ground where the reapers had left them, many sheaves like bodies prostrate in shadowy bulk; others were riding hazily in shocks, like ships in the haze of moonlight and of dusk, further off.

They did not want to turn back, yet whither were they to go, towards the moon? For they were separate, single.

"We will put up some sheaves," said Anna. So they could remain there in the broad, open place.

They went across the stubble to where the long rows of upreared shocks ended. Curiously populous that part of the field looked, where the shocks rode erect; the rest was open and prostrate.

The air was all hoary silver. She looked around her. Trees stood vaguely at their distance, as if waiting like heralds, for the signal to approach. In this space of vague crystal her heart seemed like a bell ringing. She was afraid lest the sound should be heard.

"You take this row," she said to the youth, and passing on, she stooped in the next row of lying sheaves, grasping her hands in the tresses of the oats, lifting the heavy corn in either hand, carrying it, as it hung heavily against her, to the cleared space, where she set the two sheaves sharply down, bringing them together with a faint, keen clash. Her two bulks stood leaning together. He was coming, walking shadowily with the gossamer dusk, carrying his two sheaves. She waited near by. He set his sheaves with a keen, faint clash, next to her sheaves. They rode unsteadily. He tangled the tresses of corn. It hissed like a fountain. He looked up and laughed.

Then she turned away towards the moon, which seemed glowingly to uncover her bosom every time she faced it. He went to the vague emptiness of the field opposite, dutifully.

They stooped, grasped the wet, soft hair of the corn, lifted the heavy bundles, and returned. She was always first. She set down her sheaves, making a pent house with those others. He was coming shadowy across the stubble, carrying his bundles. She turned away, hearing only the sharp hiss of his mingling corn. She walked between the moon and his shadowy figure.

She took her new two sheaves and walked towards him, as he rose from stooping over the earth. He was coming out of the near distance. She set down her sheaves to make a new stook. They were unsure. Her hands fluttered. Yet she broke away, and turned to the moon, which laid bare her bosom, so she felt as if her bosom were heaving and panting with moonlight. And he had to put up her two sheaves, which had fallen down. He worked in silence. The rhythm of the work carried him away again, as she was coming near.

They worked together, coming and going, in a rhythm, which carried their feet and their bodies in tune. She stooped, she lifted the burden of sheaves, she turned her face to the dimness where he was, and went with her burden over the stubble. She hesitated, set down her sheaves, there was a swish and hiss of mingling oats, he was drawing near, and she must turn again. And there was the flaring moon laying bare her bosom again, making her drift and ebb like a wave.

He worked steadily, engrossed, threading backwards and forwards like a shuttle across the strip of cleared stubble, weaving the long line of riding shocks, nearer and nearer to the shadowy trees, threading his sheaves with hers.

And always, she was gone before he came. As he came, she drew away, as he drew away, she came. Were they never to meet? Gradually a low, deep-sounding will in him vibrated to her, tried to set her in accord, tried to bring her gradually to him, to a meeting, till they should be together, till they should meet as the sheaves that swished together.

And the work went on. The moon grew brighter, clearer, the corn glistened. He bent over the prostrate bundles, there was a hiss as the sheaves left the ground, a trailing of heavy bodies against him, a dazzle of moonlight on his eyes. And then he was setting the corn together at the stook. And she was coming near.

He waited for her, he fumbled at the stook. She came. But she stood back till he drew away. He saw her in shadow, a dark column, and spoke to her, and she answered. She saw the moonlight flash question on his face. But there was a space between them, and he went away, the work carried them, rhythmic.

Why was there always a space between them, why were they apart? Why, as she came up from under the moon, would she halt and stand off from him? Why was he held away from her? His will drummed persistently, darkly, it drowned everything else.

Into the rhythm of his work there came a pulse and a steadied purpose. He stooped, he lifted the weight, he heaved it towards her, setting it as in her, under the moonlit space. And he went back for more. Ever with increasing closeness he lifted the sheaves and swung striding to the centre with them, ever he drove her more nearly to the meeting, ever he did his share, and drew towards her, overtaking her. There was only the moving to and fro in the moonlight, engrossed, the swinging in the silence, that was marked only by the splash of sheaves, and silence, and a splash of sheaves. And ever the splash of his sheaves broke swifter, beating up to hers, and ever the splash of her sheaves recurred monotonously, unchanging, and ever the splash of his sheaves beat nearer.

Till at last, they met at the shock, facing each other, sheaves in hand. And he was silvery with moonlight, with a moonlit, shadowy face that frightened her. She waited for him.

"Put yours down," she said.

"No, it's your turn." His voice was twanging and insistent.

She set her sheaves against the shock. He saw her hands glisten among the spray of grain. And he dropped his sheaves and he trembled as he took her in his arms. He had overtaken her, and it was his privilege to kiss her. She was sweet and fresh with the night air, and sweet with the scent of grain. And the whole rhythm of him beat into his kisses, and still he pursued her, in his kisses, and still she was not quite overcome. He wondered over the moonlight on her nose! All the moonlight upon her, all the darkness within her! All the night in his arms, darkness and shine, he possessed of it all! All the night for him now, to unfold, to venture within, all the mystery to be entered, all the discovery to be made.

Trembling with keen triumph, his heart was white as a star as he drove his kisses nearer.

"My love!" she called, in a low voice, from afar. The low sound seemed to call to him from far off, under the moon, to him who was unaware. He stopped, quivered, and listened.

"My love," came again the low, plaintive call, like a bird unseen in the night.

He was afraid. His heart quivered and broke. He was stopped.

"Anna," he said, as if he answered her from a distance, unsure.

"My love."

And he drew near, and she drew near.

"Anna," he said, in wonder and birthpain of love.

"My love," she said her voice growing rapturous. And they kissed on the mouth, in rapture and surprise, long, real kisses. The kiss lasted, there among the moonlight. He kissed her again, and she kissed him. And again they were kissing together. Till something happened in him, he was strange. He wanted her. He wanted her exceedingly. She was something new. They stood there folded, suspended in the night. And his whole being quivered with surprise, as from a blow. He wanted her, and he wanted to tell her so. But the shock was too great to him. He had never realized before. He trembled with irritation and unusedness, he did not know what to do. He held her more gently, gently, much more gently. The conflict was gone by. And he was glad, and breathless, and almost in tears. But he knew he wanted her. Something fixed in him for ever. He was hers. And he was very glad and afraid. He did not know what to do, as they stood there in the open, moonlit field. He looked through her hair at the moon, which seemed to swim liquid-bright.

She sighed, and seemed to wake up, then she kissed him again. Then she loosened herself away from him and took his hand. It hurt him when she drew away from his breast. It hurt him with a chagrin. Why did she draw away from him? But she held his hand.

"I want to go home," she said, looking at him in a way he could not understand.

He held close to her hand. He was dazed and he could not move, he did not know how to move. She drew him away.

He walked helplessly beside her, holding her hand. She went with bent head. Suddenly he said, as the simple solution stated itself to him:

"We'll get married, Anna."

She was silent.

"We'll get married, Anna, shall we?"

She stopped in the field again and kissed him, clinging to him passionately, in a way he could not understand. He could not understand. But he left it all now, to marriage. That was the solution now, fixed ahead. He wanted her, he wanted to be married to her, he wanted to have her altogether, as his own for ever. And he waited, intent, for the accomplishment. But there was all the while a slight tension of irritation. . . .

She knew, vaguely, that all the time he was not satisfied, all the time he was trying to force something from her. Ah, how she wished she could succeed with him, in her own way! He was there, so inevitable. She lived in him also. And how she wanted to be at peace with him, at peace. She loved him. She would give him love, pure love. With a strange, rapt look on her face, she awaited his homecoming that night.

Then, when he came, she rose with her hands full of love, as of flowers, radiant, innocent. A dark spasm crossed his face. As she watched, her face shining and flower-like with innocent love, his face grew dark and tense, the cruelty gathered in his brows, his eyes turned aside, she saw the whites of his eyes as he looked aside from her. She waited, touching him with her hands. But from his body through her hands came the bitter-corrosive shock of his passion upon her, destroying her in blossom. She shrank. She rose from her knees and went away from him, to preserve herself. And it was great pain to her.

To him also it was agony. He saw the glistening, flower-like love in her face, and his heart was black because he did not want it. Not this —not this. He did not want flowery innocence. He was unsatisfied. The rage and storm of unsatisfaction tormented him ceaselessly. Why had she not satisfied him? He had satisfied her. She was satisfied, at peace, innocent round the doors of her own paradise.

And he was unsatisfied, unfulfilled, he raged in torment, wanting, wanting. It was for her to satisfy him: then let her do it. Let her not come with flowery handfuls of innocent love. He would throw these aside and trample the flowers to nothing. He would destroy her flowery, innocent bliss. Was he not entitled to satisfaction from her, and was not his heart all raging desire, his soul a black torment of unfulfilment. Let it be fulfilled in him, then, as it was fulfilled in her. He had given her her fulfilment. Let her rise up and do her part.

He was cruel to her. But all the time he was ashamed. And being ashamed, he was more cruel. For he was ashamed that he could not come to fulfilment without her. And he could not. And she would not heed him. He was shackled and in darkness of torment.

She beseeched him to work again, to do his wood-carving. But his soul was too black. He had destroyed his panel of Adam and Eve. He could not begin again, least of all now, whilst he was in this condition.

For her there was no final release, since he could not be liberated from himself. Strange and amorphous, she must go yearning on through the trouble, like a warm, glowing cloud blown in the middle of a storm. She felt so rich, in her warm vagueness, that her soul cried out on him, because he harried her and wanted to destroy her.

She had her moments of exaltation still, re-births of old exaltations. As she sat by her bedroom window, watching the steady rain, her spirit was somewhere far off.

She sat in pride and curious pleasure. When there was no one to exult with, and the unsatisfied soul must dance and play, then one danced before the Unknown.

Suddenly she realized that this was what she wanted to do. Big with child as she was, she danced there in the bedroom by herself, lifting her hands and her body to the Unseen, to the unseen Creator who had chosen her, to Whom she belonged.

She would not have had any one know. She danced in secret, and her soul rose in bliss. She danced in secret before the Creator, she took off her clothes and danced in the pride of her bigness.

It surprised her, when it was over. She was shrinking and afraid. To what was she now exposed? She half wanted to tell her husband. Yet she shrank from him.

All the time she ran on by herself. She liked the story of David, who danced before the Lord, and uncovered himself exultingly. Why should he uncover himself to Michal, a common woman? He uncovered himself to the Lord.

"Thou comest to me with a sword and a spear and a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord:—for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

Her heart rang to the words. She walked in her pride. And her battle was her own Lord's, her husband was delivered over.

In these days she was oblivious of him. Who was he, to come against her? No, he was not even the Philistine, the Giant. He was like Saul proclaiming his own kingship. She laughed in her heart. Who was he, proclaiming his kingship? She laughed in her heart with pride.

And she had to dance in exultation beyond him. Because he was in the house, she had to dance before her Creator in exemption from the man. On a Saturday afternoon, when she had a fire in the bedroom, again she took off her things and danced, lifting her knees and her hands in a slow, rhythmic exulting. He was in the house, so her pride was fiercer. She would dance his nullification, she would dance to her unseen Lord. She was exalted over him, before the Lord.

She heard him coming up the stairs, and she flinched. She stood with the firelight on her ankles and feet, naked in the shadowy, late afternoon, fastening up her hair. He was startled. He stood in the doorway, his brows black and lowering.

"What are you doing?" he said, gratingly. "You'll catch a cold."

And she lifted her hands and danced again, to annul him, the light glanced on her knees as she made her slow, fine movements down the far side of the room, across the firelight. He stood away near the door in blackness of shadow, watching, transfixed. And with slow, heavy movements she swayed backwards and forwards, like a full ear of corn, pale in the dusky afternoon, threading before the firelight, dancing his non-existence, dancing herself to the Lord, to exultation.

He watched, and his soul burned in him. He turned aside, he could not look, it hurt his eyes. Her fine limbs lifted and lifted, her hair was sticking out all fierce, and her belly, big, strange, terrifying, uplifted to the Lord. Her face was rapt and beautiful, she danced exulting before her Lord, and knew no man.

It hurt him as he watched as if he were at the stake. He felt he was being burned alive. The strangeness, the power of her in her dancing consumed him, he was burned, he could not grasp, he could not understand. He waited obliterated. Then his eyes became blind to her, he saw her no more. And through the unseeing veil between them he called to her, in his jarring voice:

"What are you doing that for?"

"Go away," she said. "Let me dance by myself."

"That isn't dancing," he said harshly. "What do you want to do that for?"

"I don't do it for you," she said. "You go away."

Her strange, lifted belly, big with his child! Had he no right to be there? He felt his presence a violation. Yet he had his right to be there. He went and sat on the bed.

She stopped dancing, and confronted him, again lifting her slim arms and twisting at her hair. Her nakedness hurt her, opposed to him.

"I can do as I like in my bedroom," she cried. "Why do you interfere with me?"

And she slipped on a dressing-gown and crouched before the fire.

He was more at ease now she was covered up. The vision of her tormented him all the days of his life, as she had been then, a strange, exalted thing having no relation to himself.

After this day, the door seemed to shut on his mind. His brow shut and became impervious. His eyes ceased to see, his hands were suspended. Within himself his will was coiled like a beast, hidden under the darkness, but always potent, working.

At first she went on blithely enough with him shut down beside her. But then his spell began to take hold of her. The dark, seething potency of him, the power of a creature that lies hidden and exerts its will to the destruction of the free-running creature, as the tiger lying in the darkness of the leaves steadily enforces the fall and death of the light creatures that drink by the waterside in the morning, gradually began to take effect on her. Though he lay there in his darkness and did not move, yet she knew he lay waiting for her. She felt his will fastening on her and pulling her down, even whilst he was silent and obscure.

She found that, in all her outgoings and her incomings, he prevented her. Gradually she realized that she was being borne down by him, borne down by the clinging, heavy weight of him, that he was pulling her down as a leopard clings to a wild cow and exhausts her and pulls her down.

Gradually she realized that her life, her freedom, was sinking under the silent grip of his physical will. He wanted her in his power. He wanted to devour her at leisure, to have her. At length she realized that her sleep was a long ache and a weariness and exhaustion, because of his will fastened upon her, as he lay there beside her, during the night.

She realized it all, and there came a momentous pause, a pause in her swift running, a moment's suspension in her life, when she was lost.

Then she turned fiercely on him, and fought him. He was not to do this to her, it was monstrous. What horrible hold did he want to have over her body? Why did he want to drag her down, and kill her spirit? Why did he want to deny her spirit? Why did he deny her spirituality, hold her for a body only? And was he to claim her carcase?

Some vast, hideous darkness he seemed to represent to her.

"What do you do to me?" she cried. "What beastly thing do you do to me? You put a horrible pressure on my head, you don't let me sleep, you don't let me *live*. Every moment of your life you are doing something to me, something horrible, that destroys me. There is something horrible in you, something dark and beastly in your will. What do you want of me? What do you want to do to me?"

All the blood in his body went black and powerful and corrosive as he heard her. Black and blind with hatred of her he was. He was in a very black hell, and could not escape.

He hated her for what she said. Did he not give her everything, was she not everything to him? And the shame was a bitter fire in him, that she was everything to him, that he had nothing but her. And then that she should taunt him with it, that he could not escape! The fire went black in his veins. For try as he might, he could not escape. She was everything to him, she was his life and his derivation. He depended on her. If she were taken away, he would collapse as a house from which the central pillar is removed.

And she hated him, because he depended on her so utterly. He was horrible to her. She wanted to thrust him off, to set him apart. It was horrible that he should cleave to her, so close, so close, like a leopard that had leapt on her, and fastened.

He went on from day to day in a blackness of rage and shame and frustration. How he tortured himself, to be able to get away from her. But he could not. She was as the rock on which he stood, with deep, heaving water all round, and he was unable to swim. He *must* take his stand on her, he must depend on her.

What had he in life, save her? Nothing. The rest was a great heaving flood. The terror of the night of heaving, overwhelming flood, which was his vision of life without her, was too much for him. He clung to her fiercely and abjectly.

And she beat him off, she beat him off. Where could he turn, like a swimmer in a dark sea, beaten off from his hold, whither could he turn? He wanted to leave her, he wanted to be able to leave her. For his soul's sake, for his manhood's sake, he must be able to leave her.

But for what? She was the ark, and the rest of the world was flood. The only tangible, secure thing was the woman. He could leave her only for another woman. And where was the other woman, and who was the other woman? Besides, he would be just in the same state. Another woman would be woman, the case would be the same.

Why was she the all, the everything, why must he live only through her, why must he sink if he were detached from her? Why must he cleave to her in a frenzy as for his very life?

The only other way to leave her was to die. The only straight way to leave her was to die. His dark, raging soul knew that. But he had no desire for death.

Why could he not leave her? Why could he not throw himself into the hidden water to live or die, as might be? He could not, he could not. But supposing he went away, right away, and found work, and had a lodging again. He could be again as he had been before.

But he knew he could not. A woman, he must have a woman. And having a woman, he must be free of her. It would be the same position. For he could not be free of her.

For how can a man stand, unless he have something sure under his feet. Can a man tread the unstable water all his life, and call that standing? Better give in and drown at once.

And upon what could he stand, save upon a woman? Was he then like the old man of the seas, impotent to move save upon the back of another life? Was he impotent, or a cripple, or a defective, or a fragment?

It was black, mad, shameful torture, the frenzy of fear, the frenzy of desire, and the horrible, grasping back-wash of shame.

What was he afraid of? Why did life, without Anna, seem to him just a horrible welter, everything jostling in a meaningless, dark, fathomless flood? Why, if Anna left him even for a week, did he seem to be clinging like a madman to the edge of reality, and slipping surely, surely into the flood of unreality that would drown him. This horrible slipping into unreality drove him mad, his soul screamed with fear and agony.

Yet she was pushing him off from her, pushing him away, breaking his fingers from their hold on her, persistently, ruthlessly. He wanted her to have pity. And sometimes for a moment she had pity. But she always began again, thrusting him off, into the deep water, into the frenzy and agony of uncertainty.

She became like a fury to him, without any sense of him. Her eyes were bright with a cold, unmoving hatred. Then his heart seemed to die in its last fear. She might push him off into the deeps.

She would not sleep with him any more. She said he destroyed her sleep. Up started all his frenzy and madness of fear and suffering. She drove him away. Like a cowed, lurking devil he was driven off, his mind working cunningly against her, devising evil for her. But she drove him off. In his moments of intense suffering, she seemed to him inconceivable, a monster, the principle of cruelty.

However her pity might give way for moments, she was hard and cold as a jewel. He must be put off from her, she must sleep alone. She made him a bed in the small room.

And he lay there whipped, his soul whipped almost to death, yet unchanged. He lay in agony of suffering, thrown back into unreality, like a man thrown overboard into a sea, to swim till he sinks, because there is no hold, only a wide, weltering sea.

He did not sleep, save for the white sleep when a thin veil is drawn over the mind. It was not sleep. He was awake, and he was not awake. He could not be alone. He needed to be able to put his arms around her. He could not bear the empty space against his breast, where she used to be. He could not bear it. He felt as if he were suspended in space, held there by the grip of his will. If he relaxed his will would fall, fall through endless space, into the bottomless pit, always falling, will-less, helpless, non-existent, just dropping to extinction, falling till the fire of friction had burned out, like a falling star, then nothing, nothing, complete nothing.

He rose in the morning grey and unreal. And she seemed fond of him again, she seemed to make up to him a little.

"I slept well," she said, with her slightly false brightness. "Did you?"

"All right," he answered.

He would never tell her.

For three or four nights he lay alone through the white sleep, his will unchanged, unchanged, still tense, fixed in its grip. Then, as if she were revived and free to be fond of him again, deluded by his silence and seeming acquiescence, moved also by pity, she took him back again.

Each night, in spite of all the shame, he had waited with agony for bedtime, to see if she would shut him out. And each night, as, in her false brightness, she said Good-night, he felt he must kill her or himself. But she asked for her kiss, so pathetically, so prettily. So he kissed her, whilst his heart was ice.

And sometimes he went out. Once he sat for a long time in the church porch, before going in to bed. It was dark with a wind blowing. He sat in the church porch and felt some shelter, some security. But it grew cold, and he must go in to bed.

Then came the night when she said, putting her arms round him and kissing him fondly:

"Stay with me to-night, will you?"

And he had stayed without demur. But his will had not altered. He would have her fixed to him.

So that soon she told him again she must be alone.

"I don't *want* to send you away. I *want* to sleep with you. But I can't sleep, you don't let me sleep."

His blood turned black in his veins.

"What do you mean by such a thing? It's an arrant lie. *I* don't let you sleep—"

"But you don't. I sleep so well when I'm alone. And I can't sleep when you're there. You do something to me, you put a pressure on my head. And I *must* sleep, now the child is coming."

"It's something in yourself," he replied, "something wrong in you."

Horrible in the extreme were these nocturnal combats, when all the world was asleep, and they two were alone, alone in the world, and repelling each other. It was hardly to be borne.

He went and lay down alone. And at length, after a grey and livid and ghastly period, he relaxed, something gave way in him. He let go, he did not care what became of him. Strange and dim he became to himself, to her, to everybody. A vagueness had come over everything, like a drowning. And it was an infinite relief to drown, a relief, a great, great relief.

He would insist no more, he would force her no more. He would force himself upon her no more. He would let go, relax, lapse, and what would be, should be.

Yet he wanted her still, he always, always wanted her. In his soul, he was desolate as a child, he was so helpless. Like a child on its mother, he depended on her for his living. He knew it, and he knew he could hardly help it.

Yet he must be able to be alone. He must be able to lie down alongside the empty space, and let be. He must be able to leave himself to the flood, to sink or live as might be. For he recognized at length his own limitation, and the limitation of his power. He had to give in.

There was a stillness, a wanness between them. Half at least of the battle was over. Sometimes she wept as she went about, her heart was very heavy. But the child was always warm in her womb.

They were friends again, new, subdued friends. But there was a wanness between them. They slept together once more, very quietly, and distinct, not one together as before. And she was intimate with him as at first. But he was very quiet, and not intimate. He was glad in his soul, but for the time being he was not alive.

He could sleep with her, and let her be. He could be alone now. He had just learned what it was to be able to be alone. It was right and peaceful. She had given him a new, deeper freedom. The world might be a welter of uncertainty, but he was himself now. He had come into his own existence. He was born for a second time, born at last unto himself, out of the vast body of humanity. Now at last he had a separate identity, he existed alone, even if he were not quite alone. Before he had only existed in so far as he had relations with another being. Now he had an absolute self—as well as a relative self.

But it was a very dumb, weak, helpless self,—a crawling nursling. He went about very quiet, and in a way, submissive. He had an unalterable self at last, free, separate, independent.

She was relieved, she was free of him. She had given him to himself. She wept sometimes with tiredness and helplessness. But he was a husband. And she seemed, in the child that was coming, to forget. It seemed to make her warm and drowsy. She lapsed into a long muse, indistinct, warm, vague, unwilling to be taken out of her vagueness. And she rested on him also.

Sometimes she came to him with a strange light in her eyes, poignant, pathetic, as if she were asking for something. He looked and he could not understand. She was so beautiful, so visionary, the rays seemed to go out of his breast to her, like a shining. He was there for her, all for her. And she would hold his breast, and kiss it, and kiss it, kneeling beside him, she who was waiting for the hour of her delivery. And he would lie looking down at his breast, till it seemed that his breast was not himself, that he had left it lying there. Yet it was himself also, and beautiful and bright with her kisses. He was glad with a strange, radiant pain. Whilst she kneeled beside him, and kissed his breast with a slow, rapt, half-devotional movement.

He knew she wanted something, his heart yearned to give it her. His heart yearned over her. And as she lifted her face, that was radiant and rosy as a little cloud, his heart still yearned over her, and, now from the distance, adored her. She had a flower-like presence which he adored as he stood far off, a stranger.

The weeks passed on, the time drew near, they were very gentle, and delicately happy. The insistent, passionate, dark soul, the powerful unsatisfaction in him seemed stilled and tamed, the lion lay down with the lamb in him.

She loved him very much indeed, and he waited near her. She was a precious, remote thing to him at this time, as she waited for her child. Her soul was glad with an ecstasy because of the coming infant. She wanted a boy: oh, very much she wanted a boy.

But she seemed so young and so frail. She was indeed only a girl. As she stood by the fire washing herself—she was proud to wash herself at this time—and he looked at her, his heart was full of extreme tenderness for her. Such fine, fine limbs, her slim, round arms like chasing lights, and her legs so simple and childish, yet so very proud. Oh, she stood on proud legs, with a lovely reckless balance of her full belly, and the adorable little roundnesses, and the breasts becoming important. Above it all, her face was like a rosy cloud shining.

How proud she was, what a lovely proud thing her young body! And she loved him to put his hand on her ripe fulness, so that he should thrill also with the stir and the quickening there. He was afraid and silent, but she flung her arms round his neck with proud, impudent joy.

The pains came on, and Oh—how she cried! She would have him stay with her. And after her long cries she would look at him, with tears in her eyes and a sobbing laugh on her face, saying:

"I don't mind it really."

It was bad enough. But to her it was never deathly. Even the fierce, tearing pain was exhilarating. She screamed and suffered, but was all the time curiously alive and vital. She felt so powerfully alive and in the hands of such a masterly force of life, that her bottom-most feeling was one of exhilaration. She knew she was winning, winning, she was always winning, with each onset of pain she was nearer to victory.

Probably he suffered more than she did. He was not shocked or horrified. But he was screwed very tight in the vise of suffering.

It was a girl. The second of silence on her face when they said so showed him she was disappointed. And a great blazing passion of resentment and protest sprang up in his heart. In that moment he claimed the child.

But when the milk came, and the infant sucked her breast, she seemed to be leaping with extravagant bliss.

"It sucks me, it sucks me, it likes me—oh, it loves it!" she cried, holding the child to her breast with her two hands covering it, passionately.

And in a few moments, as she became used to her bliss, she looked at the youth with glowing, unseeing eyes, and said:

"Anna Victrix."

He went away, trembling, and slept. To her, her pains were the wound-smart of a victor, she was the prouder. . . .

NOTE ON FRANÇOIS MAURIAC'S
"THE LEPER'S KISS"

Jean Péloueyre is the invalid son of a widower of ample means, who lives in the country near Bordeaux. The father, Jérome Péloueyre, patronizes his son; and the boy's paternal aunt hopes for his early death so that his inheritance can ultimately pass to her own son, Fernand Cazenave—a sturdy fellow who is president of the county council.

Jean's father, however, hates his sister for her calculations and determines to cheat the Cazenaves of their expectations. He watches Jean, whose desire for life is greater than his physical resources. Jean immerses himself in Nietzsche in order to fortify his will.

Noémi D'Artiailh, a strong dark girl of seventeen, constantly passes by the Péloueyre house; and Jean, though he hates his own invalidism and ugliness, nevertheless decides that he must marry her. His father, ever determined to cheat the Cazenave family and aware that the D'Artiailhs would be flattered at marrying into the Péloueyres—even to an invalid—manages to have the parish priest arrange the marriage.

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

The Leper's Kiss

Esteemed by many as the first novelist of France, François Mauriac was born in 1885 in the Gironde, a land of heat, of mild winters, damp sandy soil, broad rivers, superior vineyards, wide beaches, lonely pine forests, towns of desiccated elegance—the backgrounds of his novels. Mauriac is a fervent Roman Catholic, but his pictures of the family system are among the most terrifying extant. Their stark honesty and their indictment might lead to revolutionary conclusions, but for Mauriac the path of redemption is in Christ. A partisan of the Spanish Loyalists, he actively resisted Pétain. Mauriac is the novelist of the secret life, of temptation and sin. Immensely forceful and deeply moving, he is as finished a writer as we have. In his own words, he seeks to combine French reason with the hidden world of the Russian novelists. The French say that his clarity is prolonged by pathos; that he has "the fever of style." In our selection from *The Leper's Kiss* (1922), Noémi is married to a man who fills her with physical horror, Jean Péloueyre. The marriage has been arranged by their families. The undesired union and honeymoon here find their dread chronicler.

JEAN PÉLOUEYRE was afraid that an awkward silence might fall. The fear of silence led Madame d'Artiailh and the parish priest to skim over many subjects and dissipate them wildly: they might shortly have not a word more to say. Like a magnolia blossom dilated out of its vase, Noémi's dress overflowed her chair, and like the sultry perfume of those flowers which one is careful not to leave at night in one's room, Noémi's girlish aroma on this tropical July day impregnated the impoverished parlour where God reigned on all the walls and on the mantelshelf. Jean turned not his head, but his eyes; he inspected Noémi, descended now from her pedestal; seen so close, she seemed almost as if under a microscope. He looked eagerly for flaws in this living, shimmering metal. There were dark spots at the wings of her nose; her skin, just where her throat emerged, seemed as if burned by an old stain of iodine. A word spoken by the priest brought a brief laugh, long enough for Jean to see in the pure hedge of her teeth a dulled, dubious canine. His inspection prevented the great dark eyes from rising to meet his glance, and that might have been because he was looking at her precisely in order not to be looked at by her. Thank heaven the priest knew how to talk by himself and to preach ceaselessly. For all his round little person, there was nothing jovial about him. Despite his corpulence, an inner austerity shone forth. The farming people understood him little, but the village was fond of him, and under his guidance several of its souls had gone far and high towards the spiritual life. As sometimes happens, this kindly man possessed the earth. He was all suavity, all compunction, but never was his flexible will broken. He dissuaded the most beautiful girls from the Sunday dances and offered benignly stubborn opposition to the amorous enterprises of the village youths. No one knew that he had drawn back the postmistress from the extreme brink of adultery. It was he who had made up his mind it was not good that Jean Péloueyre live alone. This shepherd was anxious that the Péloueyre house never become the Cazenave house, that the wolf find no lodging in his sheepfold.

Never before had Jean observed how deeply women breathe: when she drew breath, Noémi's breast all but touched her chin. The priest had had enough of pretence: he stood up, said the dear children probably had things they wished to say to one another, and invited Madame d'Artiailh to go into the garden and marvel at the way his plums were coming on.

And now that dim room seemed to be the scene of an entomological experiment, with its dark and fearful male enchanted by the marvellous female. Jean did not stir; he did not raise his eyes: henceforth movement was useless; he was the prisoner of the glance sent down upon him. The virgin took in with her eye this larva that was her fate. The handsome lad with multiple face, the dream companion of all young girls, he whose hard breast, and strapping arms were the refuge of their sleepless nights—this young man vanished in the twilight of the parish house, melted and faded until he became no more than the invisible cricket she heard in the darkest corner of the room. She looked at her fate, knowing it inescapable: one does not refuse a Péloueyre. Noémi's parents were so far from imagining that their daughter might not wish this marriage, that they lived in anguish lest at the last moment Jean withdraw from it. Nor did Noémi dream of rebellion. For a quarter hour past, all that was to mean life to her had been sitting there, biting its nails, twisting uneasily in its chair. He stood up, and he was even smaller than when seated. He spoke, stammered something she could not understand and which he repeated: "I am not worthy. . . ." She protested: "Oh, sir! . . ." He gave himself up to an outburst of humility, acknowledged that he could not possibly be loved, and begged to be allowed to love her. Words came to him; sentences assembled themselves. He had waited until he was twenty-three years old to tell his heart to a woman. He gesticulated as if he had been alone in an endeavour to paint the beauty of his soul. Indeed he was alone.

Noémi looked at the door and heard him unamazed. She had always been told about Jean Péloueyre that he was "a queer fish, a bit touched." He went on, and the door remained shut: nothing was alive in this parish house but the queer little man and his gestures. Noémi was becoming uneasy: a desire to weep strangled her. Jean was silent after a bit, and she grew afraid, as if she had been alone in a dark room with an invisible bat. When Madame d'Artiailh and the priest came back she flung her arms about her mother's neck, not thinking that this effusion could be mistaken for acquiescence. But already the priest was rubbing his cheek against Jean's. The ladies left by themselves in order not to awaken the curiosity of the neighbours. Did Jean peer through the shutters at sharp skinny Madame d'Artiailh, walking with her skirt swaying off centre in the gait of a dog, and beside her Noémi's somewhat frayed dress that was never again to bell beautifully, Noémi with her head bowed liked a fading flower, a flower already cut?

This mutinous youth accustomed to burrow into his corner, his single care in life being not to be observed, was aghast and stupefied for days over the rumour that arose about him. Fate had drawn him out of his darkness; like a cantrap, Nietzsche's words had sent the walls of his cell crumbling, and he sat with his head in his shoulders and his eyes blinking, like some great night-bird brought forth into the sunlight. People about him changed, too: Monsieur Jérôme neglected his diet and his drugs, and took time out of his siesta to go as far as the sacristy to talk with the priest; the Cazenaves stopped coming on Thursdays and were heard from only in a thousand infamous rumours touching Jean Péloueyre's temperament and certain peculiarities which, if they were to be believed, rendered him unsuited to the married state.

From the depth of his humility Jean marvelled that because of him the d'Artiailhs were envied. Everywhere people repeated that surely Noémi deserved her good fortune. This very old family was in high favour. Hard-working Monsieur d'Artiailh had failed at many things, and he did not blush for his post at the town hall. It was no secret that at Easter the d'Artiailhs had been obliged to give up their general servant. Jean Péloueyre looked at himself in the glass and no longer found himself so hideous. The parish priest went about everywhere saying that young Péloueyre might be a little unprepossessing, but he had a most distinguished mind. As they sat every evening on a sofa in the drawing-room and Jean listened to his own voice, Noémi's respectful silence persuaded him that, as the priest had said, what a decent girl prizes above all in her betrothed is a distinguished mind. As he had formerly let himself go in soliloquies when alone, so he now did before her, grimacing, gesticulating, quoting verses without a word to identify them, believing this beautiful girl, gathered together in her corner of the sofa, as indulgent as once the trees had seemed on the empty road. He let her deep into his secrets, and even went so far as to discourse to her of Nietzsche, who would probably oblige her to alter the foundations of her moral existence.

Noémi would dry her moist hands upon a tiny ball of linen and stare at the door behind which her parents were whispering. Heaven be praised, she could not hear what they were saying. The chatter concerning his future son-in-law worried old d'Artiailh: he had been cheated and robbed at every turn of his career, and he was convinced that this seeming reversal of the wheel of fortune hid a disaster. But Madame d'Artiailh maintained that the only basis for these calumnies was the malevolence of the Cazenaves and the distance which either religion or timidity had placed between women and Jean Péloueyre.

Eleven o'clock struck in the moonlight: Madame d'Artiailh, without a rap or cough, opened the door, hoping against hope that she might find the young pair in an attitude that would give her food for thought. She asked pardon for disturbing "the turtle-doves." "Curfew" had sounded, she said. Jean touched his lips to Noémi's hair and went off in the company of his shadow along the line of houses. His triumphant footfalls awoke the watchdogs, and the moon forbade them to go to sleep again. Thus even at night he filled the village with sound. What was curious was that he felt no longer that emotion which overcame him when at the high mass Noémi would part the air with her freshly ironed dress. He shook himself in order not to think of the September night when she would be delivered up to him. That night was never to come: a war was to break out, some one was to die, the earth was to quake. . . .

In her long night-dress Noémi was saying her prayers under the stars. Her bare feet loved the cold stone. She offered her soft breast to the commiseration of the night. She did not brush away the tear that rolled down within reach of her tongue, but drank it. The trembling of the lime-tree and its perfume rejoined the milky way. Over this skyey road her slightly mad dreams were never again to wander. The crickets crackling on the edge of their hole brought to mind her master. One evening, stretched on her sheets and delivered up to the hot night, she sobbed very quietly, then moaned a long time, looking pitifully at her chaste, unsullied body, burning with life but cool as a plant.

What would the cricket do to it? She knew he had the right to caress it, and that there was a terrible and mysterious caress after which a child would be born, a dark and puny little Péloueyre. She was to have that cricket all her life, and have him in her bed. While she continued to sob, her mother appeared. (Oh, beribboned camisole! Oh, scant-haired braid!) The child pretended to be horrified by the thought of marriage and to wish to become a Carmelite nun. Madame d'Artiailh said not a word, but took the girl in her arms and held her until the sobs came less frequently. Then she assured her that in these matters she had to follow the guidance of her spiritual director. Now, had not the priest himself elected the path of marriage for her? Noémi, her little house-wife soul full of tenderness and piety, was incapable of argument. She read no novels; she was an obedient servant in her parents' house. She was told that there was no need that a man be handsome; that marriage produced love as the peachtree a peach. But to convince her it would have been enough to repeat the axiom: *One does not refuse a Péloueyre!* One does not refuse a Péloueyre; one does not refuse tithe farms, fields, flocks of sheep, household silver, the linens of generations carefully piled in wide, high, aromatic cupboards; alliance with the best that is to be found on the moors. One does not refuse a Péloueyre.

The earth did not quake; there were no signs in the sky, and the dawn of that Tuesday in September sent a soft gleam over the earth. They had to waken Jean Péloueyre, whose slumber had been deep. The tiles in the entry and the stone threshold of the house disappeared under a carpet of holly, laurel, and magnolia leaves. All the odours of the house were swept away by the aroma of the trampled greenery. The maids of honour whispered and remained standing because of their gowns. The public room of the *Red Horse Inn* was festooned with paper garlands. The ten o'clock train brought in the wedding repast, all prepared, from the county seat. Victorias brought families, gloved in white, over all the roads. The sun played upon the furry top hats of the gentlemen whose "swallow-tails" were the amazement of the peasantry.

Monsieur Jérôme unmasked his batteries: he would remain abed. This was his fashion of ignoring all the funerals and weddings of his family. When these solemn gatherings were collected, he always took a capsule of chloral and drew his bed-curtains. People recollected that when his wife was dying he had a bed made up for himself at the top of the house and lay there with his face to the wall until he was assured that the last shovelful of earth had covered the coffin and the train had borne away the last of the guests. On the day of his son's marriage he would not permit Cadette to throw back the shutters when Jean Péloueyre, green of the face and reduced to nothing in his evening dress, asked his blessing.

Terrible day! All of Jean Péloueyre's shame overwhelmed him anew. Though the wedding procession moved into the church in a tumult of bells, his keen hunter's ear lost not a hint of the pitying murmurs that arose from the staring crowd. He heard a young man say as they passed, "What a shame!" and he saw girls laughing aloud as they gazed from the chairs on which they stood. Between the blazing altar and the excited onlookers he swayed, clinging with his hands to the plush of the *prie-Dieu*. He dared not look, but he felt trembling beside him the mysterious body of a woman. The priest read on and on. Ah! if only his reading could go on unendingly. But the sun, sifting now through the church windows and lying like confetti over the old tiles, would sink—and then would open the reign of the all-revealing night.

The heat had ruined the wedding dinner: one of the lobsters smelled high. The cone of ice had become a thick pool of yellow cream. Rather than flee, the flies would have preferred to be crushed straightway on the cakes. The stout women suffered without recourse in their harness while perspiration stained their frocks. Only from the children's table did gay cries arise. Out of the depths of his abyss Jean gazed anxiously at the faces about him: what was Fernand Cazenave whispering to Noémi's uncle? Like a deaf mute, Jean guessed the sentence from the movement of his lips: "If they had listened to us, this misfortune would have been averted; but in our position intervention was a very delicate affair." . . .

The bedroom in the family house at Arcachon was furnished in artificial bamboo. There was no curtain to conceal the vessels standing beneath the toilet table, and dead mosquitoes soiled the paper on the wall. Through the open window came the seaport odour of fish, seaweed and salt. The hum of a motor died in the direction of the pass. On the cretonne curtains two guardian angels were veiling their abashed faces. Jean Péloueyre had to battle a long time, first with his own mirror and then with a dead body. Towards dawn a feeble moan marked the end of a struggle which had lasted six hours. Bathed in sweat, Jean dared not stir. He lay more hideous than a worm beside the ultimately abandoned corpse.

She lay like a sleeping martyr. Her hair was glued to her forehead, like the hair of a woman dying; her face, thinner than ever, was the face of a whipped child. Her hands crossed over her innocent breast clutched a slightly discoloured scapulary and a couple of blessed medals. Her feet should have been kissed, her tender body raised without waking and carried thus out to sea and delivered up to the chaste foam.

NOTE ON CHRISTINA STEAD'S

"FOR LOVE ALONE"

The wedding described takes place in an Australian city in February at the end of the hot droughty summer. The sisters, Kitty and Teresa Hawkins, aged eighteen and twenty, are the daughters of a widower. Kitty is the housekeeper at home and Teresa is a schoolteacher. They are never invited to be bridesmaids because of their poverty and their father's dislike of church weddings and feminine fuss. They have made their own dresses for this big family wedding; their cousin Malfi is being married. They have never been to a dance and have childish ideas about love and life. This scene occurs in the beginning of the novel.

CHRISTINA STEAD

For Love Alone

Born in 1902 in Australia, Christina Stead later lived in England and France and is now resident in New York. Miss Stead has written *The Salzburg Tales,* a cycle of short stories; *Seven Poor Men of Sydney,* a novel of Australian poverty; *The Beauties and Furies,* centering about futile lives in Paris; *House of all Nations,* a picture of dubious international finance; *The Man Who Loved Children,* treating of the family of an egoistic humanitarian; and, lately (1944), *For Love Alone,* the quest for love of a young woman across the world.

MALFI'S husband stooped and picked up the long veil, running behind her like a woman catching chicks. By the time they reached the festal door, he had gathered up the gauze and had it frothing on his arm. Malfi was delicate, small and thin.

In the entrance, and climbing the tall wooden stairs, it was a constant hello'ing and calling out of names, rapid introductions lost in a confusion of smiles and crackling new suits and dresses, a phewing and *ouf*ing over the heat, jokes about the champagne, words and phrases, family words known to them and strange jokes in the family jargon of the Bedloes and of other strangers drifted into their harbour, floating through the air like confetti, startlingly clever, with a hundred sights of old faces refurbished and new faces varnished. The girls felt happy. They allowed themselves to drift upstairs through the carnival, surreptitiously, in the crush, picking their dresses from their wet breasts and streaming thighs. "How about a nice shower! We ought to have brought our bathers! I'm sorry for the men with their collars," rang on every side. Every word was a joke, every joke successful. They were breathless in the hall, breathless on the threshold of the hall, which was to rent for "banquets, receptions, smoke concerts, etc." The church, with its wilted flowers and tangled ribbons, had been disappointing but here there was a large if shabby splendour. From the roof hung the red and green streamers of a past fête. A few white ribands hung from the walls and a white bell with silver tinsel was suspended over the centrepiece of the long banqueting table. Trestle tables covered with white cloths ran round three sides of a large square. The room was spacious, with a dais for a small orchestra, a balustrade, a piano, music-stands. To everyone's surprise, a few musicians in black were actually there, a violinist with a cloth in his hand, a pianist, a cellist, all looking very offhand. What expense! Trust Aunt Eliza and Uncle Don for the real thing, at the wedding of their only and beloved child. And then, why not?

There was Anne Broderick, their first cousin, Aunt Bea's only child. The two girls rushed forward, "Anne, oh, Anne!" They had lived together as children. There was Aunt Bea herself, the Venerable Bede of the great Hawkins family, as she called herself, rushing up to them, again in her old serge suit, borrowed hat, cheap high heels and wrinkled stockings, all smiles and love.

"How are you doing in this heat, my chick, my cherub?" said she to Anne, whom she had not seen since the church, seven minutes away. "Did you ever see my diddums look so plump and pretty, like a spring chicken? Kiss me, my duck. How do you think my baby of twenty-four is looking, chicks?" she enquired. "My two favourite nieces! And how's your dear father, my dear brother Andrew? We are all broken up that everyone couldn't have been included, but Croesus himself would think twice about asking our tribe in its entirety and you don't know how disappointed Eliza was that Malfi insisted upon a relatively quiet wedding. Malfi herself cut down the list of guests by half. She was always thoughtful of her parents, and of course, to them, she is the pearl of great price. How very nifty, Teresa! But look, a rose is hanging by a single thread! So here we are, my chicks, in the fulness of time, at Malfi's wedding. Everything comes to her who waits, including Mr. Right. Of course," Aunt Bea bent closer, "I understand that he simply adores her, he worships the ground she walks on and the love is more on his side than hers, but we never know. Malfi is settling down at last, poor child, and all is for the best in this best of possible worlds."

"Oh, Mother," said Anne. They all laughed. Aunt Bea, excited by the wedding, said, "Of course, a good many people are surprised, between you, we, and us, that Malfi with all her chances is marrying Harry—but Harry is a dear. I've met him three or four times and he calls me his Aunt Bea, the Venerable Bede, not so Venerable, he calls me, for they, no doubt, told him about Bea and her peculiar, reprehensible no doubt, but my own qualities, peculiar to myself, I don't mean strange. And though the boy, or man, I should say! is rather a simple soul, he's a good soul and after all, handsome is as handsome does, if Malfi is happy with him, we ought to ask no more questions. And it really is time our little Malfi had a home of her own with things of her own, for we all know a time comes when a girl, however much she loves her parents, yearns for her own nest. And so it is with Malfi. And if it is love she wants, loyalty and all that, she has it, I say. I was quite won over by Harry the first time I met him and I said at once to Malfi—enigmatic as Malfi is, she has a great affection for her Nana Bea—'If you want him, he's the man, he certainly has a good heart,' and after all, who knows if she'd really be happier with Clark or Errol?"

"Oh, Mother," said Anne, "don't be stupid." She laughed.

"Diddums!" exclaimed Aunt Bea. She kissed her daughter passionately twice and darted off to one of her sisters-in-law. Her navy suit was frayed, and had shrunk, a tail of her blouse hung down behind the coat. Anne rushed after her to straighten it for her and (while the women formed a circle around her) pull up her stockings. When her stockings were tightened, the swollen veins in her thin legs and feet could be seen. But Aunt Bea came back, tugging at her coat and looking over her shoulder at their great-aunt, Aunt Esmay, a pleasant fat woman who had been a general servant when she married, was now a widow, and kept winning prizes at bridge parties. She had on a black voile dotted with indescribable flowers, through which her red neck and arms glowed.

"Now, Bea, I know," she said, "I'm too wide in the hips, there isn't a dress that sits well on my hips."

"You're not so very wide there, May," said Aunt Bea. "Look—there are Andrew's two girls looking like the babes in the woods, their get-up's a bit sketchy, they'd look worlds better with a bit of rouge, but I suppose my brother is still as old-fashioned as ever—you know you should wear the princess-type, that's all, May. The tight waist you have and that frill round the sitdown make you tubby, and then there should be shoulder interest, don't you see, you lift the eye away from the avoirdupois. If you have a frill round your shoulders and—"

"I like a plain dress with a couple of frills," said the old woman placidly, "and I never heard men didn't like hips on a woman."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll find, or you would find, that the style has changed, May. The slinky is more the thing now, not that I don't think a woman should be a woman."

"I am as God made me," said May, complacently smoothing down the ill-cut material over her belly. "I was a thin slip of a thing once, but I don't mind how I am now, Bea. A woman my age should have a little flesh! I don't want to look like a skinny old maid."

"Well, grandmothers look like young girls now, walk behind and you can't tell the difference. A woman I know was hit on the head by a man and knocked down on the pavement. She walked nicely and dyed her hair. When he stooped down and looked at her he saw her wrinkles and he left her lying there. She got up and didn't dare tell the policeman, he would have seen her face and laughed at her."

"No one will give me a knockdown," said Esmay. "I'm off! There's that woman!"

There was Aunt Di herself, the family's only elderly spinster, a golden woman, a schoolteacher, who loved her young nieces before their weddings. Aunt Di was gallant about her misfortune. "I am Miss Hawkins," she roared at people, "my nieces are Miss Teresa Hawkins, and so forth, but I am the *only Miss Hawkins."*

It did no good. They laughed at her in public and in private, to her face and behind her back. At the name of Di's crusades, once the misery was over, one roar of laughter rocked the family. Say what you would, she was just a battling old maid and did not know what man was like, whether Mr. Wrong or Mr. Right. Meanwhile, her nieces, reaping their wild oats, knew, provoked new scandals which flung Aunt Di into new tempers. Aunt Di cut off each of her favourite nieces as they reached the age of sin and fell; but no matter whether babies came untimely, or girls were mysteriously ill, or babies came "beyond the pale," no matter who was deserted and betrayed, her roaring was in a desert; the more she raved, the more the matrons, the virgins and the seduced laughed at her or hated her. She was utterly a brute or jollily ridiculous, it all meant nothing: she was an old maid.

Each girl had made up her mind to risk anything to avoid being the next "Miss Hawkins." Yet she sat in the front row at all the family weddings and gave bolts of silk, silver teapots, embroidered traycloths.

Teresa shrank from her rather more than the others, because she resembled her. She had the same bright hair and keen grey eyes. What an omen! She pretended not to see Aunt Di coming near and turned away, but Aunt Di bounded up, and seized her by the arm.

"Terry, don't you want to see your Aunt Di? The lavender suits you, Terry, I used to wear shades like that when I was your age, but I can't any more. I had a complexion like you too then."

"Why can't you any more?" Terry demanded.

"It doesn't suit my weatherbeaten skin, my dear, and my age! I'm not young any more like you. I'd be ridiculous."

Terry said, "Why give up?"

Aunt Di gave a kindly snort.

Terry heard it vaguely. She was steaming. Another aunt, Maggie, bored, had drawn close.

"If you give up, make the faintest compromise, it's all over with you," said Teresa. "I hate Bernard Shaw because he says that life is compromise. It isn't. I'll never give in."

"What's the trouble about?" asked Maggie.

Di let out a hoot. "I used to be like that, just like that!"

Maggie murmured, "Yes, you were, Di, you were a fine-looking girl, with that high colour."

Teresa turned away with bursting heart. It was intolerable because it was true. She was like "the only Miss Hawkins." Aunt Di was saying, "but I waited for Mr. Right—" Teresa went over to an isolated bentwood chair and stood beside it, thinking, "What do I care if I am? The little world of aunts has changed. All rights, all liberties, all loves! Let the last shreds of my impotence fall away, they will be right to laugh at me if I remain Miss Hawkins!"

The tables were set, the crowd was thirsty, the air was red and dust flew up. The important persons stood about exchanging well-worn confidences and courtesies and a new embarrassment set in for the hundred mixed relations. Aunt Bea kept running about keeping up the good-will, while Malfi's parents were continually shaking hands, kissing and greeting people. But the strangers brought together by Aunt Bea broke apart again at once, rendered indifferent by the heat of the extraordinary day which had now reached its maximum and was, as the men kept saying, one hundred and twelve, right outside now, the mercury frying. At first they created a little turbulency and gaiety by saying, "Have the bride and groom arrived yet?" "Were you at the church?" Many of the guests had not been invited to the church for the queer reason that Malfi, a party-giver and the showpiece of the family, wanted a very quiet ceremony. Presently these questions failed too, especially when it became certain that the newly-married pair had already arrived but were staying in a small room, because Malfi was tired.

Sylvia Hawkins, a dark cousin of twenty-eight, came bursting in with the news, creating a small unrest for a while by saying that Malfi was crying and her husband comforting her; and Aunt Bea rushed about at once saying the poor child was overwrought, over-excited, the happiest day of a girl's life often brought tears, even though they might be deep-down tears of joy, but happy is the bride the sun shines on, and it certainly was bursting a blood-vessel to blaze on Malfi, the sun never shone so yet on any Hawkins bride, and then a good-natured joke to cover the awkwardness, "How do you like that—a June bride in February? But if all brides were to get married only one month in the year, such procrastination might cause certain things to happen, for time, time waits for no man and sometimes the Little Stranger comes out of the nowhere into the here rather sooner than he is expected."

"Oh, mother," said Anne, Aunt Bea's daughter, blushing to the roots of her hair.

"Don't blush, my cherub," said Aunt Bea, "though a day like today no one knows whether it's blush or sunburn, but whatever anyone may say, I don't think it's out of place at a wedding to talk of babies. Babies do come, you know, and from weddings, and under some circumstances," and here she giggled reminiscently, and lowered her voice, "you might almost say it is the baby who is being married."

"Mother!" cried Anne, mortified.

"Fear not, my little darling," said Aunt Bea, ashamed, but only of having hurt her child's feelings. "Mother will shut up. I open my mouth and put my foot in it."

"Don't be a fool, Bea," said Aunt Esmay fatly. "My! my dress is sticking to me, they'll think I came in a bathing suit if this goes on much longer. We do need an electric fan. Wouldn't you think they'd have one? At the whist drive on Saturday they had one over each table."

"A ninon bathing suit is just right for today," said Bea, giggling, "or Eve's bathing suit."

"I'm just waiting to rip these rags off my back and step into a cold bath," said Maggie.

"Look at me in my old serge suit," said Bea, with a poor smile. "Well, all I had, don't think I wouldn't prefer ninon."

"Ninon over none-on," said Aunt Esmay, laughing at the old joke as if she had just made it up.

"Ninon over none-on," said Aunt Bea disconsolately. But she brightened at once, "Never say die, for my own precious cherub's wedding I'll wear purple and fine linen if I have to scrub floors for a six-month before. Anne will have whatever she wants, ivory satin, watered silk, Chantilly lace and of course, the family diamonds." Aunt Bea lifted one foot and wrenched at her shoe with a grimace, "These were a bargain at Joe Gardiner's, but you know I am so ashamed to keep the poor young man showing me samples that I just take anything. They seemed to fit in the shop, such a bargain, I couldn't resist it, twelve-and-six, bronze kid, but now they fit me all over nowhere."

They could not fill in the time. The tables waited, the musicians waited, the Don Marches had done shaking hands and the reception was beginning to fall flat; for it was queer and depressing that Malfi had not yet come in but was sitting, nerve-shaken, prostrated by the heat, in a cloakroom at the end of the corridor.

In the moist heat which intoxicated them, and the expectancy, the groups flowed together again, friends together, and the boys and the girls in different circles began to murmur jokes. From each joke flew off a flock of relieved laughs. Their bodies relaxed wantonly, they shook their hips and pressed their shoulders together unconsciously.

The gaiety started up again. They stood with their backs to the tables, trying to forget the claret cup, the home-made lemonade, the champagne, only turning back from time to time to see that they were not left out, that no one had sat down. The men, ashamed of their dirty turn of mind, looked around selfconsciously and tried to keep their talk decent, and a silence fell on any unseemly guffaw; but the irritated lasciviousness of the girls, on whom the heat and the thought of the wedding-night worked as an aphrodisiac, their impatience, curiosity, and discontent, threw them into a fever. It was perhaps Aunt Bea who set them off, running round to each group with a busy gossip's smile and naive lecherous interest in the wedding only half-accomplished. She kept saying, "The new wife, the wife in name only," and "A married woman *de jure* but not *de facto";* and made remarks about the weather, "I hope it will get cooler for the poor things, imagine sleeping together for the first time in such weather." She pushed these remarks farther than was her custom for the pleasure of hearing her nieces "go off into a roar."

Teresa and some young cousin, awkward, flushed and astonished, stood on the outside of a group of four girl cousins listening to Madeline, the prettiest of them all, a golden-brown ringleted girl with blue eyes. She kept doing a dance-step, wriggling her hips, fox-trotting in and out of the group and singing quatrains, or reciting limericks and cracking jokes at which the girls cried, "Oh, that's too raw," or "How absolutely killing!" or "You're vile," or "Where on earth do you get these things?" They stood listening, unable to believe what they heard, with red cheeks, baited but ashamed. Madeline sang, *"In the park, after dark, without pants in the park after dark,"* her curls flopping, her face jovial. Aunt Bea had thrust her brown head in amongst them, its skinny stalk growing among all the satiny, round stalks, her young eyes gleaming. When the two sisters heard the conclusion of this song, Kitty turned her hot brown eyes quickly to Teresa and at this, Teresa tried to walk off unobserved. Kitty followed. No one but Bea saw them go. A shriek of laughter burst from the group but was quickly hushed. Aunt Bea came after them at once.

"What is it, girls? Are you having a good time? You mustn't mind what Mad says, she means no harm, it's all innocent fun to her, there isn't a lovelier, purer girl than Mad. I know you two are two little prudes but there's a charm in a little fun. Of course, I think Mad oversteps the fine line between broad humour and the coarse, sometimes, but she's so wholesome. But you can't have too many prunes and prisms at a wedding, for, after all, what is a wedding about—" said Aunt Bea, excitedly, going far beyond what she would have said to the two little prudes at any other time. Bored with them she looked around, said, "I do think Malfi ought to make a little effort and not make her guests wait, I'm dying of thirst and that lovely claret cup, I'm so greedy for it—that's a lovely turtle neck, dear! Just a sec," and off she ran. The lonely girls passed by another group where a smart-looking girl of about seventeen was leaning forward, stuffing her handkerchief in her mouth, while a fat brunette declared, "Oh, it was awful but we simply shrieked and I never dared tell mother," and farther on they dropped anchor by some older people who were talking about the wedding presents, "A cheque for fifty pounds from the bride's parents." Here they listened eagerly, the shame dropping from their shoulders and their eyes getting tense; for they had given two presents, Kitty a handsome tray cloth from her own hope chest and Teresa an electric iron. These were Bedloes however; instinctively they closed rank to shut out the Hawkinses, and Teresa heard the words "another electric iron" from some of their own people, right at hand. The girls moved forward. Tina Hawkins was there, the girl who had just got engaged, thick-browed, jolly Tina, sullen no more but convulsed with laughter as in the old days, Tina with her guttural voice and beside her fat Aunt Esmay holding forth.

"Three electric irons and believe it or not, a pair of chamberpots."

"Oh, it's impossible."

"Call me a liar? I swear, I saw them."

"But did they put them with the—with the—oh—other wedding presents?"

"Under the table," said Tina solemnly, "of course."

"Oh, I can't believe it."

"Why not?" said Aunt Esmay. "You need them even after you get married. You don't stop wee-weeing."

The girls shrieked.

A cloud of obscure references hung over the girls. Tina said,

"The girls and Madeline dared me to give po's to Trix when Vic married; I said I would and she made me go buy them. I thought I would die when the man came up to me, a nice young man with hair plastered down. But I up and I said, 'Two po's.' He turned red as a beetroot and then he laughed and Mad, the dusty bow-bow, said, 'My sister wants them for a wedding.'"

They laughed heavily. The humour of the afternoon was already well launched and ploughing through a choppy sea.

"Oh, I could have died laughing, I never laughed so much," said Tina.

"And you gave them to Vic?" one of the girls said, unwilling to give up the story.

Aunt Bea came rushing up.

"I don't want to miss any of the fun, a family wedding doesn't come every day and especially such a grand do as Aunt Eliza gives. Oh, girls, oh, girls, Tina, your sister Madeline, you two girls, you're a menace to society. You ought to be put out. I never heard in my life such an awful," she lowered her voice, "limerick. I flatter myself I'm open-minded, I relish humour, even broad humour, but there are limits, and Mad with those big innocent baby blue eyes wide open—oh, Mother Ida! But what were you girls giggling about?"

"Tell us the limerick first."

"I couldn't bring myself to. Go and ask Mad."

Instantly, there were some deserters. Aunt Bea, seeing them disband, quickly asked again what they had been laughing at. For the first time Kitty spoke and quite seriously,

"Chamberpots. Some awful presents someone, I mean, Tina, gave Vic."

"Oh, let me die!" Aunt Bea swung on to Kitty's shoulder. "Never!"

"It's not so funny," said Aunt Esmay. "I've seen po's given twice. One pair, down at Mr. Vetter's wedding, some friends of his in the club gave them to him for a gag, when they gave him the bachelor dinner. This pair had eyes in the bottom."

Some vile jokes followed, but "Eyes, what eyes?" said one.

"Yes," said Tina seriously, "they had one pair with eyes painted in when I was down with Mad. They showed them to me. We nearly blew a rib when we saw them."

They all became serious. "Why eyes?" puzzled Aunt Bea.

"A big eye, with lashes, in blue," Tina explained.

"I've seen them things," said Esmay, "quite a few times. Maybe it means something. Mr. Vetter's friends said it was a masonic symbol."

The girls came rushing back with the limerick and started whispering it, with side glances at the Andrew Hawkins girls, "Oh, we simply exploded."

"Now you speak of it," said Bea thoughtfully, "I heard of it, a long time ago. Now what could it mean?"

"Perhaps it is Egyptian, it is the eye of Ra rising," burst out Teresa, then blushed. "It might be an old thing."

"But why would the Egyptians have hieroglyphs on their po's?" asked Aunt Bea.

"To see with at night," Tina said, and yelled with laughter.

"Venus can see at night without eyes," said Teresa. At this strange remark, they all looked at her and fell silent; they even looked a little sulky or underhand. Teresa felt herself turn red slowly from soles to hair-roots. Aunt Bea came round to them, all bonhomie, "Teresa, dear, you oughtn't to say things like that, a young girl like you, but of course we know, dear, that is just thoughtlessness. Now, you girls break it up, mingle with the others. What ever will Aunt Eliza think if we stand around in scrums? Now you two girls," she continued, bustling Teresa and Kitty off, "come and speak to your Aunt Eliza and Uncle Don, I don't believe you've congratulated them yet, and they'll feel deeply hurt if you don't. They're so fond of you, now come along, and you look so pretty, I'm sure Aunt Eliza appreciates it—"

In the natural intermittings of the concupiscent fever which had them all, she needed some arid activity. But they did not reach the circle of froufrou and decency in which the parents of the young couple stood, for the bridesmaid came rippling in, her face bloated with heat and importance, stately, as the groups flowed back before her, and she reached the bride's parents, saying, "She's coming now."

"She's coming now, the bride's coming now, the happy pair is coming now, here they come!"

The guests crushed together and then like grains through a hopper began to stream and blend their flows, they turned, swarmed and reknotted their groups, pushed back, pressed forward; nearer the door vaguely moved back and those near the table confusedly bent towards it. Someone went to the musicians and the girls pushed forward with avid expressions. Here she was, with her bridegroom, standing a moment at the door, she a little pyramid of satin, with a small oval face, looking at him, as she paused as if they were all strangers, he in a dark suit, the veil over his arm, already disturbed by a husband's worries, looking friendly. She made her way to the table, followed by him, forcing herself to speak amiably and call them all by their names. Andrew Hawkins' girls, who hung back, presently found themselves at the foot of one of the tables, opposite them Aunt Bea.

"Do you see where Annette is?" asked Aunt Bea. "Malfi insisted upon having Anne beside her, because you know they were childhood playmates and Malfi has a loving little heart, bless her, whatever her quick temper may lead her to do," and she went on, "Don't think you're left out in the cold, because you're here. I'm here too, among the poor relations, but I'm lucky to be near my two fondest nieces, aren't I? I always look on the bright side, because there always is a bright side; and when I look up there and see my girlie sitting there, so pretty in her blue—do you notice how lovely Anne's hair is today? It's the electricity in the air, I suppose—I can't help the tears starting when I think that one of these days she will be a blushing bride and I will be losing my little girl forever! I asked Eliza how she felt about losing her daughter, but she said, 'I am not losing Malfi but gaining a son.' You know, the old saw is true, I never thought of that.

I thought, How should I like to have a son-in-law! Well, and you two girls—your time will come. Look at the chances Malfi had and she is older than you—stand up, girls, it's a toast!"

The champagne had been passed around, a speech had been made by a bald, squat man at the head of the table, and he had said that though he was best man, he was only second best today, and he gave them the charming bride and happy groom. They were all standing now and Kitty whispered to Aunt Bea to ask whether she couldn't have water, for Daddy didn't allow them to drink wine and had made a point of it, in fact, just before leaving. Aunt Bea flushed and said angrily, "But you must drink Malfi's health."

"Not in wine," said Kitty unhappily, the colour in her face ebbing.

"But you must drink the bride's health, it would be awful—"

"Not in wine," said Kitty several times. "Couldn't we have water?" Aunt Bea was almost in tears, and whispered madly, "It's unkind, it's rude!" They were drinking, they half emptied the glasses. Kitty's glass stood in front of her, while Teresa held hers in her hand, out of politeness.

"Silly little idiots," hissed Aunt Bea with tears in her eyes, as they put down the glasses. The Hawkins girls stood feeling mean and stupid. When they sat down, Aunt Bea protested in an undertone, while they became red with confusion, and Kitty began to weep quietly.

"Your father's not here, you billies," said Aunt Bea.

"It's wrong to drink wine," muttered Teresa, raising her eyes.

"He made us promise," said Kitty.

"It's so rude, whatever will Eliza think, and your own cousin—do you wish her bad luck? It's heartless, drink it, drink it, before anyone notices."

Teresa frowned, Kitty raised her swimming eyes and looked about. Both were in the throes of cruel doubt; they alone had not tasted. The glasses had not been drained, but stood waiting for the toast to the bride's parents, which was now coming up. When they rose again, Teresa, with an obstinate look, seized her glass, and saying, "It's for Malfi too," sipped it cautiously, and at once drained the glass. Kitty, with a startled look, sipped hers and then put it down. Aunt Bea smiled.

"Silly billies! You didn't take the pledge after all!"

"Will we get drunk?" asked Kitty.

Teresa put out her hand tentatively, seized Kitty's glass, and drank what remained in it.

The wedding party had been delayed and it was now nearly time for the bride to dress. The sun was going down behind the buildings opposite, so that the glaze on the plates shone and blood-red spindles went through the drops of claret in the jugs. The velvet air, full of moisture and dust, clung to their faces and was palpable when they moved their hands. The seats were hot to their bodies. The bride rose and the crowd with her. A fuss began round her and as she jumped up she found the tall heel of her white satin slipper caught in two rungs of the chair. Impatiently, she wrenched it and suddenly the slipper itself flew out into the room with a devil-may-care swoop, while the heel remained in the chair. Several were bending down, pulling it out, one ran for the slipper and while the bride stood one-legged by the chair with a grimace, her father and husband worked over the heel, wedging it back into the slipper. Without a word, she took it from them, slipped it on and walked smartly around the table, with an angry shrug. Then she noticed her cousins standing, round-eyed, disorderly, half-scared and half-laughing at her mishap. She walked back and took her cousin Anne by the hand.

"Keep close to me, Anne," she said, "I want you to get it, I want you to be the next to go," and she took her bouquet from the bridesmaid and carried it to the door.

"Get me a chair," she said to her father, "I'm too small to throw it." He smiled down at her and then at the crowd of relatives driving towards him, mothers and aunts, elderly women, Aunt Di, pushing the young girls forward towards the bouquet. Don March bent down and lifted Malfi who put one arm round his neck and with a "Well, here it is, girls!" threw the bouquet towards Anne Broderick.

What a scene! They had nearly all discarded their hats and posies and stood breathing upwards, their eyes darkly fixed, with pain, not pleasure, on the bouquet. As it left the bride's hand, involuntary cries burst from them and they leapt at what was falling towards them, jumping sideways, knocking their neighbours out of the way, pushing, and if they fell back too soon they leapt again with open mouths and eyes and not a smile, their red, damp faces flushing deeper and taking on hungry, anguished and desperate expressions, as in the fatal superstitious moment, they struggled for the omen of marriage. Anne, a plump, soft, timid butterfingers, only touched a spray of maidenhair fern with two fingers; the bouquet fell lower, was batted dexterously away from her by Madeline, a tennis-player and cousin Sylvia Hawkins, the eldest of Rodney Hawkins, the rowboat-owner, a thin, tall girl, grabbed it, pushing her way through the darting, jostling mass, when it was wrenched from her by a long thin freckled hand on a bony wrist which protruded without its owner being seen. The arm to this hand, in a poor flowered stuff, was squeezed and released the bouquet;

at this moment, Kitty, who had been hovering miserably, all indecision as usual, snatched the bouquet and as she did so it fell to pieces.

"A foul," said Uncle Don, laughing slyly.

The bouquet had disappeared. The slippery thing had found its way down between tossing plump shoulders, sparring elbows and tumultuous thighs. Where was it?

In the fear of having ruined the beautiful loose spray of lilies, roses, larkspur, and fern, the girls parted, billowing away from the spot like swans. Anne, desolate, stared down at the dusty floor and cried, "You've got your foot on it!"

On the farther edge of the circle stood Teresa, her long lavender dress creased and the hem dusty; from under the skirt a long branch of budding roses strayed out. She looked down, moved her foot a little and murmured, "I have not."

She had not jumped for the bouquet, though pushed forward by Aunt Bea with her sister Kitty, because in that blink of the eye she had seen the awful eagerness of the others and the smiling, waiting circle of adults, witnesses of their naked need; and so she had drawn back a bit, with a thumping heart, disappointed but grim, at the very moment the bouquet was thrown. She picked up her skirt now and retired, not daring to pick up the branch which she so much wanted. A slight pause followed.

"Toss for it, girls," said a boy's voice. Everyone burst into a laugh. They were laughing at them, at her, because they had been struggling for a husband. But Aunt Bea came forward, picked up what remained of the flowers and saying, "Is it all right, Malfi dear?" she went among the cousins, giving a flower here, a spray of buds there. "A star-burst of weddings, it will be," she said happily, saving the situation. The girls smiled timidly at her and took the offering. Malfi, having seen this distribution, picked up her skirt without a word and ran to the stairs, clicking her little high heels, but half way up, she paused again and looked curiously at the girls, getting her flowers. When her thick dark lashes flew up, her eyes could be seen, of medium size, clear grey and keen.

"It is a shame, Mother's cherub," said Aunt Bea to Anne, as she handed her daughter a pink rosebud, "sweets to the sweet, but I know Malfi meant it for you, well, all's well that ends well. What a sly one you are," she continued to Teresa, who had now crossed over to Anne's side, "kicking it under your skirt."

"But I didn't know," protested the girl.

"How's the bunfight getting on?" said a male voice, near, teasing. "Does this mean you girls have to share the same man? How about me?"

Teresa's face became sullen and she thrust back the fern spray which Aunt Bea was handing her, "I don't want it. Here, take it," she said, pushing the spray at Anne. "Put it with that!"

"Teresa," remonstrated Aunt Bea, "can't you take a joke?"

"Not that kind of joke," shouted Teresa, in a sudden blow of voice that made the crowd, now disbanding and streaming off to coats and hats, turn and stare at her. People began to smile, laughs broke out, the men guffawed and some of the women looked hurt, severe.

"You can't take part," said Aunt Bea. "Look how you've hurt Aunt Eliza."

"You ought to be ashamed, Terry," said Kitty, rather loudly. Teresa looked at them proudly; she felt immortal. The world was like a giant egg of golden glass, she could crush it. She floated; she looked at them, gleaming. "You're cruel to us, making fun of us, this is cruel," said Teresa. She swept aside, she looked down her nose, she felt her immense strength.

"Terry!" said her sister.

"Jumping, jumping—" replied Teresa contemptuously. Bouquets! She felt she had only to command and men would kneel at her feet.

"Oh, Teresa," said the kind and always gracious Aunt Eliza, as if brokenhearted. Teresa grew pale, looked at her piteously, and looked from eye to eye of the relatives and strangers, again drawing off and giving her curious cool stares. A suspicion came over her. Why did she suddenly feel so strong and fine? Deserted by all, the girl went to get her hat. When she came back, she pushed her way to the front rank of all those waiting to farewell the bride. Malfi came down in a short time, dressed for the honeymoon journey in a short dove-grey silk suit and as she went slowly past, tapping her neat little shoes, shaking hands, kissing, "Good-bye, good-bye, thank you for coming, good-bye, thank you, good-bye," Teresa pushed up to her and said, "Malfi, good luck, I'm sorry for my rudeness, I beg pardon." Malfi stopped and looked straight up at her for a moment. The two cousins had avoided each other all their lives because they were said to be alike in temperament and brain. They were the two "clever ones." Now Malfi was small and neat and Teresa had outgrown her. Malfi reached up for a kiss, said, "Don't think too badly of me," and passed on. Teresa stared after her. What could have prompted this reply?

At the door, Malfi turned round and flung herself on her mother, weeping. "There, my poor child," said her mother, "it's all right, Malfi." The young husband came up to her, kissed her and wiped her eyes with his handkerchief. The door slammed. The long car drove off.

Those who were left in the thick twilight closing in, in the splendid intoxication of the burning air, reeking with food and body smells and cheap perfume and faded flowers and all the pleasant riot of a party's end, stood about for a while talking. Soon the girls had got together and the whispers began, while Aunt Bea again rushed from hand to hand and ear to ear and kiss to kiss, saying this time that they weren't going off on the train at all, but to a hotel for the first night. No one but Aunt Eliza knew where it was, not even the bridegroom's mother —and it was better so. . . .

NOTE ON JULES ROMAINS'

"MEN OF GOOD WILL"

Our selection involves the Saint-Papoul family, wealthy French gentry immersed in politics. The story begins just before World War I. Jerphanion has been invited to the Saint-Papoul estate by Bernard, a younger son. Bernard introduces him to his pious aunt, Bernardine, and to his sister, Jeanne. The aunt, an enemy of marriage, poisons Jeanne's imagination. However, Jeanne later marries Robert de Lavardac, a wealthy man undistinguished in appearance, intellect, and occupation.

JULES ROMAINS

Men of Good Will

Born in France in 1885, Jules Romains at twenty founded a literary school, Unanism, which held that the group, not the individual, was the true subject of letters and the only true personality. His *Death of a Nobody* (1911) crystallized this philosophy in fiction; and in 1931 he began a cycle of novels, *Men of Good Will,* in which for the first time the carrier was not the hero nor the family but all France, a collective society. Romains holds that a swarm of characters interpenetrate in business, thought, politics, finance, emotions, and that through this collective straining they converge toward Unanimity; and that this is how art must conceive our complex society. In his previous three volumes, *Psyche,* he even viewed physical love as a ritual ultimately serving Unanism. Despite this learned apparatus and theoretical foundation, much of Romains' writing is dull, and his theories eminently contestable. Romains has fancied himself a statesman and a fashioner of his age through his "Men of Good Will" who work secretly. Radicals furiously assailed his long flirtation with Hitler Germany for "Unanimity," but he proved an opponent of Vichy. Romains is also a physician, teacher of philosophy, playwright, writer on versification, and champion of unorthodox ideas in medicine.

JEANNE DE SAINT-PAPOUL was going on nineteen, for she was born in January 1890, during a particularly cold week and at the height of an influenza epidemic. The first few weeks of her life had, in consequence, left her mother with a painful memory. It seemed very unlikely that this baby, come into the world very sickly, would ever manage to survive this ungracious winter. Later on, basing herself upon this example, Mme de Saint-Papoul had ventured to say, in confidence, that there was not so much absurdity, after all, about the practices of those married couples who did not leave it entirely to Providence to decide which of their comings-together should be fruitful.

If Jeanne had been conceived at the end of September, for example, in Périgord, just at the time when they were getting in the grapes in the little vineyard on the estate, and when there spread through the château a slight odour of crushed grapes which is not unpleasant to young married couples, she would have been born in July, in the most welcoming days of the year, and they might have been able to arrange for her birth, like her conception, to take place in Périgord.

Mme de Saint-Papoul might have reflected that you cannot trust Providence by halves. If Providence decides that a conception shall take place in April, it has taken into account the difficulties that the new arrival will have to face the following winter, and It will find a way to see the baby through the weeks of frost and influenza. But in a Catholic mother's faith in Providence never assumes the absolute character of Mussulman fatalism.

Mme de Saint-Papoul might also have borne in mind that, for Christian couples, there is a correct means of avoiding unpleasant surprise: not to come together except at times when a conception seems desirable to them. This procedure preserves, at one and the same time, the rights of Providence and the rights of human liberty. But Mme de Saint-Papoul, like most women of the South, had common sense, and even a trace of paganism. Although, for her own part, she had never experienced the sensual joys of love, it struck her as ridiculous to try to impose deprivation, for months and months, on a gentleman in good health who was a heavy feeder and a sportsman. Priests, when they appeared to take this exacting doctrine seriously, seemed to her to be simple-minded people, though perhaps their ignorance of life was rather overdone. She even ventured to suspect them of a certain amount of bad faith.

As a matter of fact, she had not arrived at any very coherent system in this respect: either in theory or in practice; and we shall see that the way in which she had managed to arrange matters had not put the Marquis de Saint-Papoul beyond reach of outside temptations.

At eighteen, Jeanne was rather tall, since she stood about five feet nine—including, to be sure, the heels of her shoes, for she had never had either the idea or the opportunity of measuring herself stripped. Such is, for that matter, generally the case with women. A military medical board does not inform them in the course of its business. It was with a similar margin of error that Jeanne followed the fluctuations in her weight. During the past year she had varied between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and thirty pounds, and higher than that she could not get.

Dr. Labletterie, the family physician, thought that she was a bit thin. He had no very definite fears about her. Auscultation showed nothing wrong. But her mucous membranes were pale; her eyes often had black rims round them; and they and her complexion lacked lustre. She was sometimes subject, for no obvious reason, to slight attacks of fever, which fortunately were not regular. The doctor told her parents that the girl had a tendency towards anæmia and advised them to coax her appetite, to make her take exercise, and, if possible, to extend her holiday stays in Périgord.

He thought, for his own part, that it was not impossible she might have a little tubercular lesion, dormant since her childhood, which the end of her puberty was bringing to life again, without any imminent danger. It was beginning to be suspected at this period that tuberculosis is by nature a disease of early childhood, which accompanies the subject concerned throughout life, modelling its episodes upon the general vicissitudes of the organism. Labletterie, who had an open mind, accepted this point of view.

So far as Jeanne was concerned, the idea of nervous complications of sexual origin, or, more precisely still, the idea of one excess in particular, had crossed the doctor's mind once or twice, but he had dismissed it. His bent of mind did not incline him in this direction. Those of his colleagues who, whenever there was anything wrong with a young person, suspected a factor of this kind or tried to give it some influence, struck him as specialists with a bee in their bonnets. This was so even when, without straying into the obscurities and the fugitive notions of nervous medicine or getting psychological, they were satisfied simply to point out the entirely organic influence which certain habits might have on, for example, a tubercular lesion.

Labletterie might, at a pinch, have admitted this of a janitor's daughter. But to entertain such a hypothesis about a Demoiselle de Saint-Papoul would have struck him as in decidedly bad taste. So, in his case, the commoner, inclined towards respect for the aristocracy, confirmed the doctor in his views.

Besides, the whole trouble did not seem to be very serious, and Dr. Labletterie had less fear about her future inasmuch as the girl took after her father physically. If you left aside a few minor troubles, the Marquis had nothing to complain about where his health was concerned. He belonged to that type of thin Southerner who never looks very robust and, being very sensitive to pain, might readily turn into a hypochondriac, but who in the end, from one anxiety to another, lives to a ripe old age. It was quite possible that in his youth the Marquis, too, had gone through a difficult phase. It seemed to have left nothing behind it, not even a memory.

Jeanne de Saint-Papoul was well made in figure and pretty in face. Fine, almost subtle features. Thin lips. An air of pride which seemed quite natural to her.

Jerphanion judged her pretty close to perfection of her type and regarded the titled husband who would possess her some day as very enviable. But, for his own part, he did not feel in danger of falling in love with her. It was not that she was entirely lacking in charm, but her charm did not incline you either towards voluptuous ideas or towards affectionate ideas. Even those rather black-rimmed eyes of hers, her semi-pallor, did not set you dreaming. Probably it was because her expression remained too set, almost defensive.

Mlle Bernardine poured out tea for her niece, insisted upon her taking some buttered toast, and engaged her in small talk. Suddenly, without any preliminary, she asked her:

"What do you think of this young Colleger?"

"Oh, quite nice, isn't he? Bernard seems to like him."

"He's got fine eyes. He'd look very well but for that beard of his, which makes him look a lot older."

"I dare say."

"And, considering that he comes of very humble parents, one can't say that he's lacking in poise."

Jeanne agreed, with an indifference which was quite sincere. Up to the present she had regarded Jerphanion inattentively. Besides, she was not given to caprices, or even to rovings of the imagination. She had her boldnesses, but that is quite a different thing. These boldnesses of hers, which carried her pretty far, ran along regular lines.

There are plenty of girls who, whenever chance puts them in the presence of a young man, or of an older man whose appearance is not repulsive, imagine themselves clasped in his arms, receiving his kisses and even returning them. These are day-dreams which, as a rule, remain without a sequel, and, far from invoking reality, immediately recoil from it. Jeanne had no knowledge of such strayings. She might meet ten young men of her own social standing in the course of the day without establishing any link between their persons and the amorous dreams which she pursued.

Even more did a man like Jerphanion remain beside the question. In Jeanne the sense of social categories had become so instinctive that it participated in the spontaneous reactions of her heart. If you were Jeanne de Saint-Papoul, there was no risk of your falling in love with a pianist, a footman, a doctor, or a priest. Not that these people were one and all contemptible. You might have regard for them, esteem for them, in certain cases admiration for them. But the question of love simply did not arise.

(Jerphanion, on his side, was not wholly exempt from a comparable prejudice. If Jeanne had been a cousin of his, or a class-mate of his, it is not so sure that her fine face, those reticent eyes of hers, would have left him unmoved.)

For the rest, Jeanne's morals at this time presented a highly confused outline.

On the one hand, they were based upon a mental system which, ever since her childhood, had had to withstand few attacks: religious beliefs, habits of piety; ideas which were elementary, but rustic in their solidity, about society, about the hierarchy of human conditions, about the rights of her caste to wealth, leisure, and consideration. Nor did she call in question the principal duties which had been taught her. She was even inclined to scruple. Little failings worried her no less than big sins. All this, which came to her from her education, still held very well together.

The disorder began with more personal feelings. She was very much preoccupied with matters of love, even in its most concrete details. For years she had been picking up information about it, mingled with fable which her schoolfellows whispered to her. Recently she had started looking for erotic books. She had found two or three in her father's library, and, in order to consult them without risk of being surprised, she resorted to ruses which made her heart beat faster.

The memory of this reading, or incidents in her day-dreaming—but never those of her outside life—led her to some voluptuous aberrations, which, as a matter of fact, she did not overdo, and which had nothing whatever to do with her appearance of delicate health. This reading and these practices of hers were accompanied by bitter remorse. Jeanne held the flesh and its obsessions and its pleasures to be diabolical. Whenever she heard them condemned, she felt a sense of relief.

On the other hand, she had an intense sentimental life which was in no way touched by these sensual itchings. She had developed for one of her fellow-pupils at the Sainte-Clotilde school, and then for one of her mistresses, a passionate affection. She had ended by loving them both at the same time. What helped her in this division of her affections was the different shading of each of these flames of hers. Towards her friend Huguette, she abandoned herself especially to the joys of protective tenderness; towards her mistress, who was a secularized nun, to ecstasies of admiration. She was very jealous about both of them, and readily took umbrage. Sometimes she turned suddenly pale when the mistress paid a compliment to another pupil or smiled at her, and she stayed full of bitterness about this all day long.

These two passions of hers were absolutely chaste. They did not impel her to indulge in equivocal caressing or to seek physical contact. Despite her tendency to scrupulousness, she did not reproach herself about them in the least. Probably she was less wrong about her case than the psychiatrist who might have talked hastily about homosexual vocation.

She was the less inclined to discover impure elements in this direction inasmuch as nobody around her seemed to see any such thing.

Her schoolmistresses, of course, were not blind to these passionate friendships of hers. They did not encourage them. But, whether it was from the simplicity of mind of chaste women or from profound wisdom as educators, they did not show that they were particularly disturbed about them.

Besides, these two passions of Jeanne's left room for a love of the head, of a different colour again, for a cousin of hers, Robert de Lavardac, whose family lived near Bordeaux, and whom she met, but for some exceptional circumstance, only during the holidays. This last love of hers belonged to the order of romantic day-dreams. It got on very well without the presence of the loved one. Cousin Robert was a kind of knight, of bold young lord, who fought far away, who cherished your image in secret, and whose last thought you would be if he fell wounded to death. She talked freely about Robert to her friend Huguette, who was not in the least jealous of him.

It may be added that when she surrendered herself all alone to erotic reading or emotions, Jeanne never evoked any one of these three persons whom she loved in different ways. Far from it. She was too fond of them, she thought too highly of them, not to keep them outside what she regarded as a circle of hell.

This brief glimpse of her will warn us what Jeanne's relations with Mlle Bernardine were likely to be. At certain moments she was not far from regarding her aunt as an old fool. At others she expected from her mysterious information about life, without stopping to ask herself where the sedentary and superannuated demoiselle could have got it. The tone of their conversation had become pretty free—much more than it was between the Marquise and her daughter.

Mlle Bernardine took a pleasure, which she did not analyse, in putting her niece face to face with certain crudities of life, whether it was a question of social relations, of the true nature of feelings among people, or of more scabrous matters. She even had the impression that she was here fulfilling a duty. Ought she not to forewarn the girl, at the moment of her going out into society, against the dangers of an education much too conventional?

AUNT AND NIECE; THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

Macaire, after going and begging from Jeanne, had returned to his place on the carpet. Mlle Bernardine looked at him.

"I was just talking to Monsieur Jerphanion about that villainous bit of a dog. And about all the chances of mixtures and cross-breeding. Monsieur Jerphanion has lived in the country. He's seen all that at close quarters. What about you? Have you ever had occasion to see it at close quarters?"

"See what, Aunt?"

"Why, the behaviour of animals among themselves, dogs especially, the males with the females, and what follows. Why blush like a fool? Do you suppose that a country girl doesn't know all about such things, in detail, or that she blushes when people mention them before her; or that she is less good a Christian, or less respectable, for that? On the contrary, if you ask me, on the contrary."

She seemed to be thinking something over. Then she went on:

"The real sin is idealizing all that. Then . . . your imagination takes fire. And you think that, because you use fine words, the thing underneath them changes its nature. Bah! Much better to admit frankly that among dogs and among ourselves it's just the same thing. Nothing gives me the horrors more than these spoutings about love."

She stressed the "l" and the "v" with a sarcastic tremolo.

"Today, all the same, they don't dare go on telling girls of your age that marriage merely means kissing in a carriage and looking for an apartment. I haven't been afraid with you to dot the 'i's' and cross the 't's' sometimes. But still I'm not quite sure that, up-to-date girl though you think you are, you understand what it's really all about—what this wonderful business really is that they keep on talking around all the time, on the ground that they want to leave something as a surprise for you."

In spite of her embarrassment, Jeanne listened without missing a syllable or an inflection. Her aunt was coming to the heart of the problem that most obsessed her. Neither her conversation nor her reading had fully satisfied her. Certain details remained inexplicable, or difficult to imagine. Certain information, contradictory.

But, above all, if she flattered herself that she knew more or less about the conditions and circumstances of the amorous act, she could not manage to picture it to herself or to understand it. It lacked, in her eyes, both centre and meaning. All her conjectures, all her day-dreams, had furnished only the circumference of this great mystery; in the middle it plunged into the void.

Mlle Bernardine bent over towards Jeanne. She assumed the air of someone who is about to confide the supreme secret. Then, keeping an eye on the door, she said in a low voice:

"Well, you know already, don't you, that the man and the woman do something together? Or, rather, it's the man who does something to the woman. You know what organs are concerned, don't you? So it isn't very hard for you to guess exactly the real nature of the act. . . . What the man does to the woman, you understand me . . ." she spoke almost into Jeanne's ear—"what he does *into* the woman, is *an excrement.*"

She sat up straight again, sipped a mouthful of tea, then settled herself in her arm-chair, quite silent now, and relaxed in the well-being of a kind of vengeance.

Meanwhile the words she had just spoken, and the arresting image that they conveyed, sank suddenly into the girl's mind, with a force, a vibration, an effect, that Mlle Bernardine was very far from having measured in advance. They attracted to them a whole swarm of scattered and partial ideas, giving them meaning and cohesion. Religious dogmas, moral interdictions, echoes of catechism, of confessions, of sermons; regrets, repugnances intimately experienced; things she had read or been told, hitherto badly understood; a taste, half-inborn, half-Christian, for humiliation and its bitter delights; the poignant presentment of a redemption of pleasure through mortification; all this without prejudice to intense physical images, which took on an almost unbearable eloquence—a whole enormous crystal, sinister in its sheen, took shape all at once.

* * * * * * *

It had been arranged, for various reasons, that, the ceremony concluded, the young couple should spend the whole of Wednesday at the château, where the festivities would still be in full swing. Early on Thursday the car would take them to Souillac so that they might catch the Toulouse express. They would thus be able to get to Barcelona the same evening. After a short stay there they would start on a brief tour of Spain, going by way of Saragossa, Madrid, and Burgos. Finally, they would spend about a week at Saint-Sebastian, returning thence to France, and naturally taking the château of Lavardac on the way, where they would arrive before the end of the wine harvest, while the air was still heavy with the scent of the gathered grapes.

A little before eleven o'clock on Tuesday night the young bride and bridegroom left the great drawing-room while the dancing was still at its height. They were joined in the dining-room, whither they had gone to take a little refreshment at the buffet, by the Marquise.

"You can go off to bed, if you like," she murmured; "of course you can—nobody need notice. . . . I wish you a happy night, dear children."

She looked tenderly at her daughter and pursed her lips into the gesture of a kiss. She longed to take her in her arms and to go with her the first few steps of the way, but feared lest so dramatic a farewell might be in bad taste.

In spite of her precautions, however, it was not long before the young people's absence was noticed. The news spread discreetly through the room, though its reception was marked by no more definite signs than a glance here, a smile there, and a question asked in seeming innocence: "Where is Jeanne?" This absence of the chief actors gave a sudden meaning to the whole party. It set free a thousand thoughts, all concentrated upon, all making fond play with, the same central fact, though for some the stark reality was swathed in veils of soft romance, while others itemized the event with varying degrees of detailed elaboration, hungrily stripping it of all disguise, setting it in the full glare of lewd imaginings (many, to "see" the better, danced with half-closed eyes), caressing it in thought with lingering insistence, as a cat will rub its fur against the furniture.

Jeanne was very tired. The excitement which had kept her going all afternoon had fallen flat. She was tired in her body, tired of eating, tired of people. For the last few days she had been too much on the move and too long on her feet; she had had too much food, had seen too many new faces. Worst of all, she had felt the hot light of public notice focused upon her. Wherever she went she had been looked at. At first the experience had intoxicated her, but she had soon grown surfeited. Her vanity was not great enough to keep the threat of a headache indefinitely at bay. For no consideration in the world, however, would she have changed places with anybody, nor would she have consented to postpone what now she knew to be inevitable. She was afraid that Robert, noticing her fatigue, might leave her alone from a foolish scruple of delicacy.

There was no trace of sensuality in her impatience. It was due chiefly to a desire to free herself from a state of painful expectation, but there was also in it a certain amount of intellectual curiosity: "I'm going to have *that* experience. I'm going to know what it is that other women know!" This curiosity was sharpened by several other considerations of a more intimate and more complex nature, such as: "Now at last I've got the chance of learning, without doing wrong, the most important thing in life, about which I could only have found out up to now at the cost of doing wrong." Finally, without giving definite form to the thought, she realized that she was about to verify a certain hypothesis upon which she had recently been brooding.

In the course of the last two days things had been happening to her, and within her, of so unusual a nature that her attention had been pricked into wakefulness. In the first place, she had asked herself, on more than one occasion, and as though the question had forced itself into words without any deliberate formulation on her part: "Do I love him? Do I love him enough to be happy in the idea of what is happening to me, of what seems to be earning me the congratulations of so many people?" She found herself watching Robert at every moment of the day without letting him see that she was doing so, observing his gestures, his attitudes, listening to the least word he uttered. And this she did, not with the sense of being a critic standing severely apart, but conscious of an uneasy community of interest with him, as though she feared for him the judgment of another, not realizing that this other was herself.

Towards the end of the second day she managed to free herself from this particular form of torture, or rather its importance for her suddenly became less. What now obsessed her, and now seemed urgent, was not the question whether she could possibly spend her entire life with a man called Robert de Lavardac, but the far more imminent problem—exactly what degree of shuddering distaste would be produced in her by the mere fact, uncomplicated by any further consideration, of lying all night long, in the completest intimacy, beside a man, sharing the warmth, and exposed to all the accidental contacts, of his hairy body.

It seemed suddenly to Jeanne that she was being asked to go counter to every standard of that civilization in which she had been so carefully bred. Civilization teaches us to keep from touching others and to avoid being touched by them; to defend the integrity of our bodies and our skins; to eschew promiscuity, the sharing of goods, the confusion of individuals; to think of contact as a weaker form of contagion.

Though as a rule she was careless of what was happening around her, she could not but notice the amount of talk that was going on, nor help guessing that she was its object. She saw Mme de Lavardac and her mother drawn together in mysterious intimacies, as though they were intent on resolving some problem of extreme delicacy, after which the Countess would go and look for her husband and take him aside into the small morning-room. A little later, hunting for Robert, she would see him talking with his father or listening to him with obvious embarrassment. When he rejoined her, she would ask him: "What were you talking about so seriously?"—a question to which he seemed to find it very difficult to reply. Finally, these odd manœuvres, the full extent of which she was not at all sure that she knew, came to a head when Mme de Saint-Papoul said: "I want you to listen to me, darling; there's something I must talk to you about," which had been preliminary to a secluded interview in the Marquise's bedroom.

There, behind closed doors, Mme de Saint-Papoul had embarked upon a long explanation which had been complicated by the speaker's wish to be explicit while not overstepping the bounds of decency. The substance of her lecture had been as follows:

"This isn't the first chat we have had together, and you know already that to be a young girl is one thing and to be a married woman is another. . . . I won't go over that again, nor will I talk about the rights that marriage gives to the man of your choice. . . . One marries in order to have children, and I hope you'll have a great many—that is, you're sure to have some; but you're very young, and there's plenty of time. There's the question of health to be considered. . . . You must make the most of your youth. If you don't take certain precautions there's always the danger that you'll have children before you mean to, or you may have them at a bad time of year—at the beginning of winter, for example. . . . Some think that these precautions are the husband's affair, but sometimes men don't know about these things, or dislike them, or forget. In any case, it's safer if the wife knows what ought to be done. Although I *am* your mother, I find it very difficult to speak to you of these matters, though I wish my own mother had given me a word of warning. Not that I should have had fewer children, but I should have chosen the times of their birth with greater care, and that would have been better for them as well as for me. . . . But women of her generation never thought of such things, or, if they did, they hadn't the courage to talk about them. . . . In my day, one learned them by chance, and too late."

This beginning was followed, not exactly by a practical demonstration, but by very detailed instructions which Mme de Saint-Papoul, adopting a parental innocence of tone and employing very careful euphemisms, strove to make resemble as far as possible the lessons in the care of the body which she had given to Jeanne when she was a small girl. Jeanne, however, had experienced a shock. So would any young woman in her position, but though, like her, she might have suffered from a sense of shattered illusions, she would not have misunderstood the intention with which the advice was given. Not that, probably, Jeanne misunderstood it consciously or in the strict sense of the word, but, deep down, she ranked her mother's revelation with the mythical description of carnal intercourse the first hints of which had been deposited in her mind some two years earlier. In other words, she gave but half her attention to what her mother was telling her about children and the power of making conception a deliberate act, while she brooded bitterly upon the thought of bodily defilement.

Jeanne, therefore, went through her marriage night much (if the two things may be compared) as a scientist conducting a decisive experiment by which he hopes to verify some favourite hypothesis; or as a man, reading a newspaper of a political complexion other than his own, follows the misdeeds of the Opposition against which his own favourite sheet has already warned him. She was out for confirmation rather than discovery. Given the different moral backgrounds of the two young people, it was not likely that the result of the experience would be to reverse Jeanne's attitude, still less to awake in her a bodily response capable of making her suddenly forget her preconceived ideas on the subject.

Robert was rather nervous. He wished above all things to behave properly and not to make a fool of himself. Jeanne was conscious of no particular physical repulsion. Indeed, realizing that the *idea* of loving her cousin which she had long entertained had of late increased, she persuaded herself without difficulty that what she felt for him would easily develop into a pleasant wifely affection. She was not, however, sufficiently in love with him to surrender passionately to his approaches. On the other hand, she saw no reason to be unduly shy. She was aware of no feeling of attraction or excitement, and expected no gradual growth of desire. Her only thought was: "Why delay the inevitable?" She made no attempt to resist him when he removed the exquisite night-dress which had been the gift of her mother-in-law. She accepted with a good grace, even with a sort of gratitude, the gentle kisses and caresses which he lavished upon her, rather as a patient might feel gratitude to a surgeon for his reassuring conversation while he is busy preparing and sterilizing his instruments. But she felt that Robert was making rather too much of the introductory phase. She wanted to say: "Please go straight to the point; I know what to expect, and I'll be brave."

The difficulties and discomfort attendant upon the process of achieving an entry were less than she had feared they would be, and not, in themselves, worth bothering about. She was not a physical coward. Her nervous system was entirely under the control of her will. It seemed to her so natural that the act of defilement should be preceded by a certain amount of bodily pain that she was not tempted to exaggerate the pain itself.

But from this moment she allowed her whole consciousness to be flooded by the thoughts, the intuitions, the imaginings (more numerous and more complicated than she could take account of) which clustered for her about the magic phrase: "What a man does to a woman, *in* a woman, is to deposit his excrement." Jeanne made ready to receive this excrement. The man's position, his movements, the sort of animal concentration which she could see increasingly in his eyes, all gave weight to the idea and touched Jeanne's attitude of expectancy with a dramatic intensity. "I'm going to be the recipient of his excrement; I'm going to submit, in duty bound, to the worst of all outrages. It's my duty to submit without the slightest resistance or the least movement of defense." It was, she told herself, the law of her destiny, nor was it very surprising, when she came to think of it. Everyone in the world was subject to the law of sin and to the law of redemption through humility. Had not man been taught to be humble before his persecutors, to turn the other cheek?—spat upon, trampled, mocked with a sponge soaked in bitter drink. The cup must be emptied to the dregs. "I'll shut my eyes. In another minute perhaps I shall be just that and no more, just the receptacle of his excrement. . . . Then I'll wash myself as my mother told me to. So be it. . . . But first I want to focus my mind on the awful thing that's going to happen to me. . . . Oh, which *is* happening to me . . . which is happening inside me, now, at this very moment, now!"

She stopped breathing. From head to feet she was conscious of nothing but the sensation of this unspeakable horror. It flooded her body from the tips of her toes to the roots of her hair. No shame could ever be like this shame, not a detail of which was spared her. Nothing could ever cleanse her again of this filth; her whole body felt soiled and sticky with it. Then she began to breathe again. She felt broken, emptied. Never, in all her life, had she felt so utterly sacrificed, or so deeply assuaged. . . .

NOTE ON EVELYN SCOTT'S

"THE NARROW HOUSE"

Winnie Price, daughter of a well-to-do family, has married Laurence Farley, a rather poor young man. Winnie's family had disapproved her marriage, but after the birth of the two children (Bobby and May), they felt willing to accept their son-in-law. Laurence, however, remained resentful, and the attempt at reconciliation produced new difficulties. Our selection begins at the time when Winnie has become ill and suffers a dread of dying.

EVELYN SCOTT

The Narrow House

Born in Tennessee in 1893, Evelyn Scott early fled from her traditional society, though she still esteems some of its values. She traveled widely and until 1936 lived for the most part abroad. She is a prolific writer, richly endowed, and her long list of fiction includes the best historical novel of her country, *The Wave.* She is an expressionist, boldly revelatory of her own shortcomings, devastatingly honest in personal recollection, and broadly illuminating with respect to the infernos and joys of married life. *The Narrow House* (1921), from which we reprint a passage, is a direct, corrosive story of a mediocre marriage. Miss Scott has extensive literary interests: she is a poet (her *Precipitations* was widely read), and she has been largely concerned with the nature of artistic creation, its purpose, source, and social meaning. For her the individual is paramount and she regrets the present preoccupation with economic matters, which seems to her a threat to intelligence and an abstract deadener of that which is unique in Everyman.

WHEN Laurence came home to dinner Winnie, still dressed in her best, was alone in the living-room.

"Hello! You've assumed a new rôle," he said from the doorway.

She could see that finding her there made him uncomfortable. She smiled at him with a kind of happy pain.

He came forward. He was kind and distant. His lips brushed her hair.

She gazed up at him. Her eyes, with crushed back lids and lifted lashes, melted open for his.

"I don't want to be sick, Laurie. I've got to go away with Mother. You won't hate me for going away with her? I do need a change so!"

He stood before her with a kind of mocking fatigue, but she saw that he was sunk deep in himself. She wanted to drag him up.

He shook his head. "I don't know what to say to you lately."

She reached up and laced him with her arms. "Am I so unreasonable? Oh, Laurie, I don't want to die."

He seated himself helplessly on the arm of her chair. "Why think about something so improbable as dying?"

"But I might. I want you to care," she whispered.

"Don't you think I care?" His voice had a grating note as he tried to be light.

"Of course—yes—I guess so. But it's so awful to think about."

"Then don't think of it."

"I can't help it."

Death. The word had not been alive to her until this moment. Suddenly she heard it about her, whispering like wings. She floated beyond Laurence, beyond the room.

With a quick intake of breath she shut out terror grown too delicious.

"Then you will let me go away with Mother? You won't stop loving me, Laurie?"

"I'll shake you for talking nonsense," he said, getting up.

She hated him for escaping her, but her mind was made up and the next day when her mother called the morning of departure was set.

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Settling her pince-nez on her flat nose before her fixed and despairing eyes, Mrs. Price pressed Winnie's face to her flat black bosom. "I'm so glad, dear. It was so foolish of my little girl to hold out against having her parents do anything for her. Your father is so good, Winnie. There is nothing I can ask for you that he isn't willing to give. You mustn't deprive him of that pleasure."

Winnie thought of Laurie and was stiff in her mother's embrace, yet at that moment could not have said which of them was most irritating.

Mrs. Price always avoided Laurence's name.

When Mrs. Price had gone Winnie lay in her room on the couch, excited and oppressed. She said death to herself, and the word echoed inside her like a cry down a long hall. Then the echo was lost in the deeps of darkness. But it continued to quiver below the surface of her life.

Winnie thought of being sick. She was harsh with a knowledge of herself. She would not be sick. Closing her eyes she imagined her mouth. With a kind of horror of its own act, it pressed Laurence's. She woke up.

The noonday sun outside was pale with rain. Winnie heard footsteps in the still noon street. Death. The dancing word fluttered ahead of the hurrying feet.

Winnie moved fretfully on the couch. She saw Death as the face of an insistent stranger thrust into her own. Stupid thing which she did not know. She pushed it aside feebly, feeling for what had meaning to her—Laurence, Bobby, Mrs. Price.

All at once she realized that Laurence had come home for something and was in the room. He rummaged at his desk. He was subdued in his movements, trying not to rouse her. She watched him between half-closed lids. He was familiar to her. The very crooked set of his thick neck in his broad shoulders was food to her. Hungrily she opened her eyes wider and lifted herself to her elbow.

"What's the matter, Laurie?" Her whisper, sharp and sweet, pierced the somber stillness of the room where the shades had been drawn for her to rest.

"Hello! I came to get a note book. Did I wake you?" He had started at the sound of his name, but as he faced her he held himself contained in his sharp cold smile.

"I don't care. I've been having horrid dreams, Laurie."

"That's a silly thing to do."

"Don't make fun of me. Come sit by me a minute."

"I haven't much time, dear." He came and sat on the edge of the couch. "Don't you want the shades up? It's so gloomy."

"I want you first. See how cold my hands are!"

She gave him her hands. He took them as though he did not know what to do with them. His eyes were still full of the brightness of the street and he could not see her plainly.

"I want you to love me. Oh, Laurie, you do love me!" She groped up his arms, his cheek, until she had found his mouth. She covered it up with her hand. She did not want it to speak against her. When he tried to talk she pulled him down until his eyes pressed her breast. She drew him deeper into the warm covers on the tumbled couch. She was cold. Her hands said that he must warm her. Memories of pain were silver veins in her body. Twisting herself on the couch to bring him nearer, she wrenched her arm, sharp pang of happiness.

"Love me!" she entreated. Her mouth clung against his. She could feel the force of his quickening heart beats as though they were her own. The muscles in his arm twitched under the rough-napped cloth of the sleeve which brushed her cheek. Her nostrils dilated against his arm. The smell of his body was bitter. She wanted to drink in the vividness of his strong live flesh that resisted her.

Around the dimmed squares of the yellow shades, light, entering, made shining borders. Noises drifted in the light under the bright edges of the yellow shades. Hammering from the house on the corner reverberated through the room.

"Winnie! I can't—you mustn't. You're not well enough. You mustn't excite yourself like this!"

She felt him passive in his resistance. Reluctantly her arms slipped away. Her resentful eyes shone at him from the gloom with a small and pointed light.

He leaned away from her, patting her hair as he came gradually to his feet. He did not want to see her because she made him feel guilty toward himself. Then he was obliged to look. When he smiled at her he kept her outside his eyes. He seemed relieved in spite of himself.

"Poor little sick girl," he said as to a child. "I'm glad you're going away with your mother. We'll give you a nice rest and have you all fixed up."

"You don't love me!" she said, looking at him stormily.

"Please, Winnie. Things are hard enough." His face was drawn with the effort of his continued smile.

"You don't." She turned over and closed her eyes.

"Don't be absurd." He joked uncomfortably.

But she would not look at him.

He walked out on tiptoe as though he thought her asleep.

When she knew he was gone she began to cry, and, keeping her eyes closed, moved her head from side to side and struck into the pillows with her fist.

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Laurence did not go home to dinner, but remained working at the laboratory until after midnight. As he walked home the city streets, washed thinly with light, were yet thronged. His mind was sharply intent on itself. It was like the keel of a ship, parting the swarming life before it.

But as he drew nearer the place where Winnie was his heart strained. He felt suffocated. There were women standing in doorways. Their shadows wove the darkness together and drew it tight about his heart. He hated his work but the doing of it gave him relief, for it could not enter him.

The glow from a street lamp fell on his own house—purple-red walls that held Winnie. The big gilt figures on the transom above the door glistened on the glass that gave back a blank reflection of the light. He put in his latch key. The door, swinging away from him, seemed drawn inward with the pull of the darkness.

It shut ponderously behind him. He hesitated a moment, resisting some unknown inevitability. It was very still in the dark.

Only the stairs were half revealed by the pallor of the light that came in high up from the street.

He walked up softly and opened the bedroom door. He could hear a breath like the respiration of shadow. He knew it was Bobby.

Then somehow he realized that Winnie was awake and holding herself apart from the dark.

He did not speak. She did not speak. He sat down and began to take off his shoes.

As he laid the shoes away from him he was aware of her awareness as though she were seeing him stoop forward in the dark. He had a sense of his own motion as a pale line etched across a thick surface. When he unbuckled his belt and began to draw his trousers over his feet he felt the sharp sweep of his moving arms tearing the quiescence of the room.

He stood up naked. His cold toes gripped the hot nap of the roughened carpet. He pulled on his pajamas and the white cloth, as it was drawn up his legs, was cool white fire, that burnt upward from his bare feet.

The room seemed a final blackness into which the dark of the night outside had flowed and gathered as in a pool. Still feeling himself burning white in the cool cloth, Laurence walked to the side of the bed and looked down to see if Winnie were asleep.

Very faintly he saw the rigid line of her body, but through her nightdress he perceived her tense, like a protest. He could not see her eyes but he shivered with the feeling that they were very wide open and sightless. The darkness was against her eyes, holding her rigid upon the white sheet in the dark bed.

"Laurie!"

"I thought you were asleep." He did not know why he lied.

She did not answer at once and he stood waiting. "Laurie!"

He felt suddenly feverish in his cold clothes.

She reached out and touched him. The feel of her hand flowed along his hand and up the veins of his arm. He felt as though her hand had been laid upon his heart. His heart beat quickly. He denied his heart. He was passive. He stood apart from himself. He was unrelated to Winnie, sick and tense in the bed.

"Laurie!" she whispered again. She drew him down beside her.

"You are sick, Winnie," he said. Sure of himself, he did not resist her.

She reached up, groping to cover his mouth. It made her angry when he told her she was sick. She did not want him to build up words between them. She tried to draw him into herself, into the formlessness of contact.

"Oh, I can't sleep, Laurie! I want you to love me."

"I do love you, Winnie. If I seem not to love you it is because you are sick."

"I'm not sick! I won't be sick. You don't love me!"

"I do!"

"Please love me! I'll die if you don't love me, Laurie!"

He resisted her.

She drew his hand to her and placed it like a cup over the swell of her breast.

He trembled. "Winnie, my darling, we mustn't—"

"Laurie, I'll go mad!"

"Why, Winnie? I love you, Winnie."

But he did not love her. She seemed to him like a sickness. They were both sick with her.

"Kiss me again."

He kissed her. His palm tingled with the strangeness of her breast.

"I can't let you go 'way from me, Laurie!"

"I don't want to."

She held him. Suddenly she was no longer strange. His hand read the strangeness of her with the relief of familiarity. She burned him with wonder.

Winnie felt him yield and was glad, but her triumph congealed in agony. She fell away from him. She was cold. She was still. The throbbing of her body came to her like an echo which she could scarcely hear. She had forgotten the meaning of it. Who was this man? She was afraid.

She waited for him to leave her.

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Laurence was tired with the feeling of Winnie that flowed through his body. She was in his veins degrading him with possession.

If she should have a child. He would not think of it. He walked over to the couch and climbed upon it. He would not think. Driving his thoughts from him, as he lay down, he felt the flap of the window shade and the respiration of Bobby[1] rattling in his empty mind.

He tossed. His body was hot. The sheet he pulled over him made him shiver. Then he grew cold and longed for the heat to cover him up. He felt naked. He wanted to lie drowned in heat, miles thick in darkness.

* * * * * * *

Winnie awoke. It was morning. The room was cool and bright. Sunshine made the curtains glow. Patches of light shuddered delicately here and there on the carpet. A spear of sunshine shattered itself on the looking-glass.

Laurence slept on the couch with one arm tossed up and his head thrown back. His mouth was open. His face in sleep seemed stupid with pain. Bobby slept, too, stirring and murmuring a little. Winnie found something oppressive in the sight of people yet asleep like this in the full blaze of the sun.

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[1] their young child

Winnie's mind was clear and calm with the ease that came of sleep, but in the center of her being there was a dark spot of indecipherable vividness.

Last night. A dark spot of terror. Laurence had been frightened by what they had done. She wanted him to be frightened.

Death. If she had a child she would suffer—not he. White and holy, she felt herself a beautiful stillness in the turmoil of Laurence's cowardice.

She could not part with this fear. If she had a child Death was her hand from which he could not escape.

* * * * * * *

Midnight. The street lamps shone into the bedroom, making bright shadows of the drawn shades. The bureau, the bed, bits of furniture here and there, darker than the darkness, reflected the light heavily.

Laurence stood outside the door in the hall. He was trembling, afraid of his own room. He had stayed away all day because he could not see Winnie, because he hoped that when he reached home she would be asleep.

It was quiet. He opened the door and stepped inside. The sudden draught lifted the shades ponderously and let them drop again.

Fresh, clean wind from the quiet midnight street surged into the room. Light floated in under the lifted shades. It seemed as if the wind, cold and shining, were washing away the darkness.

Winnie was awake again. Laurence stood still.

He waited a long time. He felt shaken. If I take her again she will die.

He did not believe it. He went toward her with a nausea of relief. "Die" was the word of a song. It was the strange music of passion that said die.

He waited by the bed. He wanted her to tell him to go away. He could feel her still and looking at him.

When he knelt by the bed and reached his arms around her he wanted her to evade him.

"Winnie?" She trembled when he touched her. He wanted her to speak. But she was quiet.

She let him kiss her mouth.

Death. His understanding could not hold the vagueness of the strange escaping word. He felt her thinning from his grasp. His veins swelled with death.

Then he became the death-giver, glad, in spite of himself, of the drunkenness of moving with the unseen. Through the banality of sex which oppressed him, there pushed the will of an exalted and passionate horror.

He took her. They were dead.

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Winnie lay face downward and sobbed. There was no triumph in her now. She felt herself as if already large with child, heavy and helpless. Through the darkness of her closed lids she could see, as if before her, Laurence's coarse and handsome head, his eyes turned toward her with their strained gaze, in the odd set of his neck that kept his face always a little to one side. She knew now how much she hated him.

* * * * * * *

Laurence, walking along the deserted streets, was relieved to find the long vistas ending in darkness. The night rose high and expressionless before him. Beyond the dim lights, the violet-blue horizon was a clear quiet stretch like a lake of glass covered with flowering stars.

His pain was choked in him, suffocated by the quiet.

His mind was sick yet with Winnie's sickness, but the pain of her no longer belonged to him. He wondered if she would have a child, if he had killed her. But the agony of his conjecture related to something already finished. She had made him love her against them both. He did not want love like that. It could never be otherwise. They were separated from each other by their own bodies.

EMANUEL CARNEVALI

Melany Piano

Born in Florence, Emanuel Carnevali, after a youth of poverty, emigrated to the United States at seventeen. There he was forced to take the poorest of jobs, as dishwasher, lunchroom worker, and the like. Miserably poor and ill, he nevertheless mastered English with such power that his style, both in verse and prose, astounded many of America's leading writers. He knew the slums, the lower depths; he recorded the cheats of life, but in his portrayal and song there was no obvious phrase, no well-worn indictment: the imagery was fresh, the ideas those of a Latin, bearer of an immemorial culture, in a society which despised him. He wrote for *The Little Review* and many other *avant-garde* magazines, and some of his best work appeared in Paris, among which was *The Hurried Man* (1925) from which "Melany Piano" is taken. Broken in health, he entered a sanitarium at Bazzano, Italy, where he lived sick but undefeated. The French critic Régis Michaud says that Carnevali purged American poetry of artifice. In any event his flavor once enjoyed, cannot easily be forgotten.

I hope something will be done about this, my god!

HER name was Melany Piano and she was born of a very good family, in Turin, Piedmont, Italy. Turin is a grey serious earnest city with long straight streets, a huddle of square blocks. If she had been born out in the mountains where Emily lived this wouldn't have happened, but then . . .

I saw the old photographs of the family, a yellowish mist on them. Photographs of the romantic period. Period in which one still believed in the solemn face or the melancholy face or the noble face or the pale face. The face of her mother was solemn and mysterious. The face of her father was that of a man with the heart of a knight; crowned with the well-balanced smile of the successful man; life to him was an adventure in gallantry—women and war. He was, in fact, an officer of the Italian army in the Erythrean expedition.

He had brought her and her sister along with him to Africa, after her mother had died. She had lived well and happily in Africa, so she used to tell us children, all beautiful tales of hyenas, pestilence, devoted Negro servants and Ras Alula and Ras somebody else.

She was skinny, she had a long lean nose, no curve from the nose to the lips, small eyes, tight bulging little forehead; she was not attractive, as they say. Her hair was very beautiful but that did not make a real difference. One had to know her well to appreciate the beauty that was in her hair. That is why she longed to be well known, well understood. A famous explorer—there is a monument erected to his memory in the city of Parma—fell in love with her. She was to marry him. But he was the scientist kind, earnest and inelegant, she did not love him. He gave her a doll once, on her nineteenth birthday, and she was very angry. He told her once: "You are not attractive, Miss, but your mind has infinite beauty and I beg to let me take you for my wife" . . . But she was too young and a bit too happy to understand a thing like that. And he was naive, and she was not, she was very well-read and eaten up from within by the ever-hungry little old moth, romance. He was a good fine man to marry and she knew so, but she wanted a man with long soft hair and kind big hands. A man who could sit for hours still and perfectly sad and who would understand when the hungry hands of a well-read woman would smooth his hair: who would not turn around and, out of embarrassment, try to fight the situation with a smile or an irrelevant phrase.

She came back to Italy. She was still gay and light but, already, she was motherly. She was motherly with every man that came to her with not unkind sorrows in his manly heart. Such a man came and she talked to him and on an evening they cried together, in front of a window; because the sunset burnt yellow and purple, the woman was thinking that it is sweet and heavenly to understand the sorrows that have hardened into the flesh of a man. He was to marry her but the family did not want. But he said: "You before, the family after, though I love them very much." But, instead, he went away, left her pregnant.

Who will say that he was wrong? He had never loved her. It is easy to believe that you love: he was an honest man. She should have known.

Now her father was dead and she hadn't any money and the man wanted to help her out. But she was proud. She went to work, she had a little monthly allowance from the government; she got along and she loved the baby, who was lean and sickly: his eyes were the eyes of the father: very black and very cold, so black that there was no bottom to them, so cold, so black, that you would have called them invisible eyes: eyes that were a darkness and not a light.

She was proud. She never forgave the man. Because she was honest and hard, she wasn't a loose girl, and she gave herself for love. She was honest and magnificently aloof and the Negro servants in Africa thought she was a great Queen, the great White Queen: the way she was majestic and sweetly hard with them. She spoke of books and wherever she went they called her "the lady" and it was a marvel to see how everybody was intimidated in her presence. To see how strangers loved her, after a few minutes with her.

Another man came along. He was shrewd, and hungry for a girl, the way dogs and men are hungry, in the summer in a North American City where a girl is hard to get if you're not initiated. He had her too.

Because she loved him.

Then, there was another child.

Two children, not brothers, and the mother a lady, proud, now bitterly proud, but proud still like a Queen, poor White Queen. And she was honest and she was so naive that when men's eyes who sought a girl met hers she did not really know all that they searched and lewdly touched. For she wasn't attractive and she knew it; that is why she was maternal with men.

Then she was thirty-two. She met a man, a soldier, who was twenty-five. He was beautiful, strong, a great sport, a game guy, a spoiled child, penniless and ignorant. She had a little money, she got him out of the army where he thought he'd have to remain, and got him a job. Taught him French and how to know good books. Made him civilized and sophisticated. He was intelligent; he never, after, wanted to admit that he owed so much to her.

This man did not like the children.

He was young, so he fell in love with several girls and she understood and suffered—and then she feared he'd go away, so she was good to him, she was especially good to him when he broke her heart. Sometimes her heart would break and she would fall in a swoon.

One day he was sick. He stayed in bed two months with ulcers on his body and the fool doctor never could tell what the trouble was. He went to the hospital and he was told that it probably was the syphilis but that they couldn't be sure until they had tested his blood. Next day on the cardboard tablet beside his bed, on which doctors wrote the diagnosis, he saw some signs or words that amounted to a "yes." It meant to him that he had the syphilis; he howled like a wolf that has been caught. He came back home to her. He was forced to stay in bed two more months.

He had caught it going around in brothels. But she was a great mother to him, while he stayed in bed. But she knew that he did not love her. She was maternal, although she was old, although she beat her children, she was maternal with him. She nursed him as a sweet nurse nurses a sweet child; and while his hair was falling because of the syphilis he had caught in a brothel she'd call him "her lovely child."

But he did not like the children and he did not love her.

So she saw, at last, well, the great grotesque.

When she beat the children she'd scream so that the tenants of the house would all come out on the balconies to gossip about "that crazy woman." She beat them and several times she fainted, after.

He cursed her to hear the noise she was making. He cursed her vulgarly and she was still a lady, a proud Queen.

She knew that he was getting to hate her. But it was too late to act kindly, to be careful, for his sake, of what she was doing, to put up a show of kindness and to discriminate. Because oldness and ugliness and defeat were coming; and he was going away. Sometimes she sat in the kitchen, alone, when the children were out, and she wished that he would die: she knew that he'd go away when he was well.

When she got up, every morning, she used to put powder on her face.

That was all right, but now she had to put *too much* powder on her face. After her yelling to the children the two wrinkles around her mouth were deeper.

Before, a little rouge on the cheeks sufficed, but now she had to put too much rouge on and that was ugly.

And then, one day she had to buy three false teeth—the front teeth, the front teeth!

Of course he saw them.

So she beat the children, she swooned, she had headaches for days and nights.

He had to go to the hospital again. He came back almost well, but he was doubled up and his skin showed under his thin hair. He was bitter too, he had the syphilis so there wasn't much choice for him in life and so he wasn't going to try to get along with her—he'd go after something easier. One day he told her he'd quit her.

First she knelt down before him and prayed.

But then she stood up and fought tremendously, fought beautifully because she fought against the big failure which was now all visible; she looked at the failure and fought, and it was a beautiful thing to do.

There comes the big failure and some bend
their heads
over their chests
like birds in the cold.
And some send their miserable bodies

to the absurd war.
But there are eyes in the world
that see the dance of the absurd,
and always someone
who carefully listens to the great song of it.

All her miserable body. Her skinny body and the last hunger within it. She called her romantic heart and all the books she had read, to help her. Hurled herself—at last!—against the monster who awaits, during all the nights of the infinite years, the hour of our awful scream —he waits for it and when he has heard he waits still, to hear other screams, he waits still, he waits forever. She hurled her miserable body and her face, now like a dismal little clenched fist, in a fight of teeth and nails . . . false teeth!

And once more the world came to its symphonic night: she cursed the stupid chairs and cursed the yellow lamp and the shadows that had become infinitely old on the grey walls. Cursed the windows and the breeze they inhaled came over her and made her sob with an agony of self-pity.

And now she would weep softly
because the breeze from the window was a
  melody of remembrances.

She wanted her limbs to break; why wouldn't this thing burst through her limbs! She offered her limbs in sacrifice if the awful thing would only burst through her! Wanted to stretch her arms so violently that they'd sever from her body—nodded her head up and down.

Her head swayed up and down and sideways, sideways and up and down and she moaned, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh . . . boat in the tempest. And the children wished that she would stop sometime because they wanted to play.

I know that things await the terrible screaming. The monster in the nights, the cavern whence the cool darkness sails towards our windows and our mouths, the purest line of the evening horizon on the lake—how many times have I gone near to them, knowing that they awaited, have gone near and stopped short, was afraid, or did not know how to scream. The sheer pink flower before fantastic eyes in the morning, the sheer pink flower is a gleaming eye looking upon a horror of putrefied dreams. The sky when it is farthest from the earth, the purest sky, the sky that has flown high and high because the air was so clear, the sky feels the touch of the scream we so fearfully constrain—as the very white breasts of a woman hear the caress of the desperate lover. These things await our horrible screaming.

The woman had repudiated her children, she had betrayed them. So now she did not dare to ask for the children's love. She was too hungry. She knew that children give love to everyone, but to hungry people they don't. Children are pure and they are afraid of the awful eyes of hungry persons. Children refuse love to begging hearts, because their world is a world of fair and happy exchange, and they are right. And they are right because they are beautiful.

And the man, he was just as bitter, his was another fight, so he just shook her off.

God sent her a cancer in the womb and she died, a week after the big fight.

I saw her dead. This lady, Melany Piano, was my mother's sister, my aunt.

I'm in a hurry.

I wrote this about her: I am a writer and I write about persons and things:

You are dead and your mouth is stretched
and pulled down at the corners,
a curve swept downward.
Your hair is tall grass after
the flood has passed over it.
You have now become the image of the cry that in your life
you have miserably and compromisingly striven to utter.

. . . . . .

Seriously, seriously,
with cool gentlemanliness,
I lay a word of reproach
on your grave, my aunt.
That was a crime, as I was only
a child and you were not
ashamed to soil me with the sight of your tragedy.

You did not hide your awful
crazy hands from me.
Made a clown of me when
you dressed me in black
to mourn
your dead.
Still, desperate hands of last clean wind,
wind of the fall,
bring rags of noises from
the city to the cemetery;
the evening is a lady in grey

mourning for all the dead
and she is rustling by
on the road
beside
the graveyard.
Why do I come? Were you not
my aunt?
It's pity that brings me here,
or it is
your dead face projected
in all the darknesses, which has driven
me here—for the soul of man is a ghost
and it haunts him and it drives him.
But
it is not
sorrow.
Aunt, a sorrow for you would shatter the world,
send fragments on the horrible snout of God!
The day I saw you dead
your eyes were terribly open—
fingers searching
the infinite for
an echo to a cry of
horrible
pain.
Also, you were resting,
my aunt.

What do you want from me? I do not try to explain, I do not care to understand. I have not been cursed by those who have died in misery: because I have not slain anyone with misery. But I read the newspapers, I see rouge-and-powder faces and sometimes, as I pass alongside your houses with my hurried heart for a moment attentive to your noises, I hear children, being beaten, yelling; and today I have seen one of those women whose eyes have ceased to look at the world. I tell you, it's Melany Piano's curse that is working out. Yes, surely, her life had been accursed, also, by a thousand other women like her, who had lived before.

I guess it's a well balanced retaliation.

It is you who are concerned. You who are dragging yourselves along under the shadow that Melany Piano casts upon your world. Between the moon and you, tonight, looms the dead face of Melany Piano. And you hide under your roofs.

But I, but I, I'm as light as a rubber ball. I'm a butterfly and no tragedy has shaken the light dust from my wings, no tragedy will. It is youth that accounts for that, but overmore, it is *my* youth, the youth that will last till I die. I'm on a journey beyond you and your things, you and your colors and words. On the mountains, over this city and that, I am the bird that has no nest, I am the happy stranger, I'm sailing under the sun. The sun is very kind to me, he could not be any kinder. The friends that are with me know that also.

The crickets are singing the tale of my journey,
the winds all have greeted my sails.
Listen, then,
to the crickets and
let the wind
play around your houses
as you mourn
for Melany Piano,
my aunt.

NOTE ON ROMAIN ROLLAND'S

"JEAN CHRISTOPHE"

Jean Christophe, a young musical genius of the Rhineland, comes to Paris where, among many friends, he meets Antoinette Jeannin and her brother Olivier. A stern, honorable idealist and writer, Olivier becomes Jean Christophe's champion; the two young men are inseparable.

Olivier falls in love with a rich girl, Jacqueline Langeais, but dreads to ask her hand in marriage because her family might think he was motivated by self-interest. However, the Langeais consent. Our selection begins after the honeymoon.

ROMAIN ROLLAND

Jean Christophe

Romain Rolland (1856-1944) has been esteemed far more in other lands than in his native France. Friend of Renan and Tolstoy, an archaeologist at the French School in Rome, a student of musical history, Rolland came late to fiction. In his masterpiece, *Jean Christophe* (1905-12), he created the modern "flowing novel," through which the culture of an age and the philosophy of the author are carried by the kaleidescopic hero. *Jean Christophe* became the Bible of progressives, although esthetes assailed its literary quality. He is the enemy of philistine culture and moves undaunted in his search, through suffering and enthusiasm, for the untrammeled, creative life of the artist. Rolland is the affirmer: in an age of analysis, he knows love as one mode in which creative man and woman attain full personality. During World War I, Rolland opposed the conflict and lost nearly his entire following. But he became an inspiration to radicals, as a friend of the Soviets and the foe of chauvinism. Many who deny his literary significance nevertheless recognize in him a believing and generous soul.

AFTER a few weeks' traveling in Italy they had settled in a town in the west of France, where Olivier had gained an appointment. They saw hardly anybody. They took no interest in anything. When they were forced to pay calls, their scandalous indifference was so open that it hurt some, while it made others smile. Anything that was said to them simply made no impression. They had the impertinently solemn manner common to young married people, who seem to say:

"You people don't know anything at all. . . ."

Jacqueline's pretty pouting face, with its absorbed expression, Olivier's happy eyes that looked so far away, said only:

"If you knew how boring we find you! . . . When shall we be left alone?"

Even the presence of others could not embarrass them. It was hard not to see their exchange of glances as they talked. They did not need to look to see each other: and they would smile: for they knew that they were thinking of the same things at the same time. When they were alone once more, after having suffered the constraint of the presence of others, they would shout for joy—indulge in a thousand childish pranks. They would talk baby-language, and find grotesque nicknames for each other. She used to call him Olive, Olivet, Olifant, Fanny, Mami, Mime, Minaud, Quinaud, Kaunitz, Cosima, Cobourg, Panot, Nacot, Ponette, Naquet, and Canot. She would behave like a little girl; but she wanted to be all things at once to him, to give him every kind of love: mother, sister, wife, sweetheart, mistress.

It was not enough for her to share his pleasures: as she had promised herself, she shared his work: and that, too, was a game. At first she brought to bear on it the amused ardor of a woman to whom work is something new: she seemed really to take a pleasure in the most ungrateful tasks, copying in the libraries, and translating dull books: it was part of her plan of life, that it should be pure and serious, and wholly consecrated to noble thoughts and work in common. And all went well as long as the light of love was in them: for she thought only of him, and not of what she was doing. The odd thing was that everything she did in that way was well done. Her mind found no difficulty in taking in abstract ideas, which at any other time of her life she would have found it hard to follow: her whole being was, as it were, uplifted from the earth by love; she did not know it; like a sleepwalker moving easily over roofs, gravely and gaily, without seeing anything at all, she lived on in her dream. . . .

And then she began to see the roofs: but that did not give her any qualms: only she asked what she was doing so high up, and became herself again. Work bored her. She persuaded herself that it stood in the way of her love: no doubt because her love had already become less ardent. But there was no evidence of that. They could not bear to be out of each other's sight. They shut themselves off from the world, and closed their doors and refused all invitations. They were jealous of the affections of other people, even of their occupations, of everything which distracted them from their love. Olivier's correspondence with Christophe dwindled. Jacqueline did not like it: he was a rival to her, representing a part of Olivier's past life in which she had had no share; and the more room he filled in Olivier's life, the more she sought, instinctively, to rob him of it. Without any deliberate intention, she gradually and steadily alienated Olivier from his friend: she made sarcastic comment on Christophe's manners, his face, his way of writing, his artistic projects: there was no malice in what she said, nor slyness: she was too good-natured for that. Olivier was amused by her remarks, and saw no harm in them: he thought he still loved Christophe as much as ever, but he loved only his personality: and that counts for very little in friendship: he did not see that little by little he was losing his understanding of him, and his interest in his ideas, and the heroic idealism in which they had been so united. . . . Love is too sweet a joy for the heart of youth: compared with it, what other faith can hold its ground? The body of the beloved and the soul that breathes in it are all science and all faith. With what a pitying smile does a lover regard the object of another's adoration and the things which he himself once adored! Of all the might of life and its bitter struggles the lover sees nothing but the passing flower, which he believes must live forever. . . . Love absorbed Olivier. In the beginning his happiness was not so great but it left him with the energy to express it in graceful verse. Then even that seemed vain to him: it was a theft of time from love. And Jacqueline also set to work to destroy their every source of life, to kill the tree of life, without the support of which the ivy of love must die. Thus in their happiness they destroyed each other.

Alas! we so soon grow used to happiness! When selfish happiness is the sole aim of life, life is soon left without an aim. It becomes a habit, a sort of intoxication which we cannot do without. And how vitally important it is that we should do without it. . . . Happiness is an instant in the universal rhythm, one of the poles between which the pendulum of life swings: to stop the pendulum it must be broken. . . .

They knew the "boredom of well-being which sets the nerves on edge." Their hours of sweetness dragged, drooped, and withered like flowers without water. The sky was still blue for them, but there was no longer the light morning breeze. All was still: Nature was silent. They were alone, as they had desired.—And their hearts sank.

An indefinable feeling of emptiness, a vague weariness not without a certain charm, came over them. They knew not what it was, and they were darkly uneasy. They became morbidly sensitive. Their nerves, strained in the close watching of the silence, trembled like leaves at the least unexpected clash of life. Jacqueline was often in tears without any cause for weeping, and although she tried hard to convince herself of it, it was not only love that made them flow. After the ardent and tormented years that had preceded her marriage the sudden stoppage of her efforts as she attained—attained and passed—her end,—the sudden futility of any new course of action—and perhaps of all that she had done in the past,—flung her into a state of confusion, which she could not understand, so that it appalled and crushed her. She would not allow that it was so: she attributed it to her nerves, and pretended to laugh it off: but her laughter was no less uneasy than her tears. She tried bravely to take up her work again: but as soon as she began she could not understand how she could ever have taken any interest in such stupid things, and she flung them aside in disgust. She made an effort to pick up the threads of her social life once more: but with no better success: she had committed herself, and she had lost the trick of dealing with the commonplace people and their commonplace remarks that are inevitable in life: she thought them grotesque; and she flung back into her isolation with her husband, and tried hard to persuade herself, as a result of these unhappy experiences, that there was nothing good in the world save love. And for a time she seemed really to be more in love than ever.

Olivier, being less passionate and having a greater store of tenderness, was less susceptible to these apprehensions: only every now and then he would feel a qualm of uneasiness. Besides, his love was preserved in some measure by the constraint of his daily occupation, his work, which was distasteful to him. But as he was highly strung and sensitive, and everything that happened in the heart of the woman he loved affected him also, Jacqueline's secret uneasiness infected him.

One fine afternoon they went for a walk together in the country. They had looked forward to the walk eagerly and happily. All the world was bright and gay about them. But as soon as they set out gloom and heavy sadness descended upon them: they felt chilled to the heart. They could find nothing to say to each other. However, they forced themselves to speak, but every word they said rang hollowly, and made them feel the emptiness of their lives at that moment. They finished their walk mechanically, seeing nothing, feeling nothing. They returned home sick at heart. It was twilight: their rooms were cold, black, and empty. They did not light up at once, to avoid seeing each other. Jacqueline went into her room, and, instead of taking off her hat and cloak, she sat in silence by the window. Olivier sat, too, in the next room with his arms resting on the table. The door was open between the two rooms; they were so near that they could have heard each other's breathing. And in the semi-darkness they both wept, in silence, bitterly. They held their hands over their mouths, so that they should make no sound. At last, in agony, Olivier said:

"Jacqueline. . . ."

Jacqueline gulped down her sobs, and said:

"What is it?"

"Aren't you coming?"

"Yes, I'm coming."

She took off her hat and cloak, and went and bathed her eyes. He lit the lamp. In a few minutes she came into the room. They did not look at each other. Each knew that the other had been weeping. And they could not console each other, for they knew not why it was.

Then came a time when they could no longer conceal their unhappiness. And as they would not admit the true cause of it, they cast about for another, and had no difficulty in finding it. They set it down to the dullness of provincial life and their surroundings. They found comfort in that. M. Langeais was informed of their plight by his daughter, and was not greatly surprised to hear that she was beginning to weary of heroism. He made use of his political friends, and obtained a post in Paris for his son-in-law.

When the good news reached them, Jacqueline jumped for joy and regained all her old happiness. Now that they were going to leave it, they found that they were quite fond of the dull country: they had sown so many memories of love in it! They occupied their last days in going over the traces of their love. There was a tender melancholy in their pilgrimage. Those calm stretches of country had seen them happy. An inward voice murmured:

"You know what you are leaving behind you. Do you know what lies before you?"

Jacqueline wept the day before they left. Olivier asked her why. She would not say. They took a sheet of paper, and as they always did when they were fearful of the sound of words, wrote:

"My dear, dear Olivier. . . ."

"My dear, dear Jacqueline. . . ."

"I am sorry to be going away."

"Going away from what?"

"From the place where we have been lovers."

"Going where?"

"To a place where we shall be older."

"To a place where we shall be together."

"But never so loving."

"Always more loving."

"Who can tell?"

"I know."

"I will be."

Then they drew two circles at the bottom of the paper for kisses. And then she dried her tears, laughed, and dressed him up as a favorite of Henri III by putting her toque on his head and her white cape with its collar turned up like a ruff round his shoulders.

In Paris they resumed all their old friendships, but they did not find their friends just as they had left them. When he heard of Olivier's arrival, Christophe rushed to him delightedly. Olivier was equally rejoiced to see him. But as soon as they met they felt an unaccountable constraint between them. They both tried to break through it, but in vain. Olivier was very affectionate, but there was a change in him, and

Christophe felt it. A friend who marries may do what he will: he cannot be the friend of the old days. The woman's soul is, and must be, merged in the man's. Christophe could detect the woman in everything that Olivier said and did, in the imperceptible light of his expression, in the unfamiliar turn of his lips, in the new inflections of his voice and the trend of his ideas. Olivier was oblivious of it: but he was amazed to find Christophe so different from the man he had left. He did not go so far as to think that it was Christophe who had changed: he recognized that the change was in himself, and ascribed it to normal evolution, the inevitable result of the passing years; and he was surprised not to find the same progress in Christophe: he thought reproachfully that he had remained stationary in his ideas, which had once been so dear to him, though now they seemed naïve and out of date. The truth was that they did not sort well with the stranger soul which, unknown to himself, had taken up its abode in him. He was most clearly conscious of it when Jacqueline was present when they were talking: and then between Olivier's eyes and Christophe there was a veil of irony. However, they tried to conceal what they felt. Christophe went often to see them, and Jacqueline innocently let fly at him her barbed and poisoned shafts. He suffered her. But when he returned home he would feel sad and sorry.

Their first months in Paris were fairly happy for Jacqueline, and consequently for Olivier. At first she was busy with their new house: they had found a nice little flat looking on to a garden in an old street at Passy. Choosing furniture and wallpapers kept her time full for a few weeks. Jacqueline flung herself into it energetically, and almost passionately and exaggeratedly: it was as though her eternal happiness depended on the color of her hangings or the shape of an old chest. Then she resumed intercourse with her father and mother and her friends. As she had entirely forgotten them during her year of love, it was as though she had made their acquaintance for the first time: just as part of her soul was merged in Olivier's, so part of Olivier's soul was merged in hers, and she saw her old friends with new eyes. They seemed to her to have gained much. Olivier did not lose by it at first. They were a set-off to each other. The moral reserve and the poetic light and shade of her husband made Jacqueline find more pleasure in those worldly people who only think of enjoying themselves, and of being brilliant and charming: and the seductive but dangerous failings of their world, which she knew so much better because she belonged to it, made her appreciate the security of her lover's affection. She amused herself with these comparisons, and loved to linger over them, the better to justify her choice.—She lingered over them to such an extent that sometimes she could not tell why she had made that choice.

Happily, such moments never lasted long. She would be sorry for them, and was never so tender with Olivier as when they were past. Thereupon she would begin again. By the time it had become a habit with her it had ceased to amuse her: and the comparison became more aggressive: instead of complementing each other, the two opposing worlds declared war on each other. She began to wonder why Olivier lacked the qualities, if not some of the failings, which she now admired in her Parisian friends. She did not tell him so: but Olivier often felt his wife looking at him without any indulgence in her eyes, and it hurt him and made him uneasy.

However, he had not lost the ascendancy over Jacqueline which love had given him: and they would have gone on quite happily living their life of tender and hard-working intimacy for long enough had it not been for circumstances which altered their material condition and destroyed its delicate balance.

Quivi trovammo Pluto il gran nemico. . . .

A sister of Madame Langeais died. She was the widow of a rich manufacturer, and had no children. Her whole estate passed to the Langeais. Jacqueline's fortune was more than doubled by it. When she came in for her legacy, Olivier remembered what Christophe had said about money, and remarked:

"We were quite well off without it: perhaps it will be a bad thing for us."

Jacqueline laughed at him:

"Silly!" she said. "As though money could ever do any harm! We won't make any change in our way of living just yet."

Their life remained the same to all appearances: so much the same that after a certain time Jacqueline began to complain that they were not well enough off: proof positive that there was a change somewhere. And, in fact, although their income had been doubled or tripled, they spent the whole of it without knowing how they did it. They began to wonder how they had managed to live before. The money flew, and was swallowed up by a thousand new expenses, which seemed at once to be habitual and indispensable. Jacqueline had begun to patronize the great dressmakers: she had dismissed the family sempstress who came by the day, a woman she had known since she was a child. The days of the little fourpenny hats made out of nothing, though they were quite pretty all the same, were gone,—gone the days of the frocks which were not impeccably smart, though they had much of her own grace, and were, indeed, a part of herself! The sweet intimate charm which shone upon all about her grew fainter every day. The poetry of her nature was lost. She was becoming commonplace.

They changed their flat. The rooms which they had furnished with so much trouble and pleasure seemed narrow and ugly. Instead of the cozy little rooms, all radiant with her spirit, with a friendly tree waving its delicate foliage against the windows, they took an enormous, comfortable, well-arranged flat which they did not, could not, love, where they were bored to death. Instead of their old friendly belongings, they obtained furniture and hangings which were strangers to them. There was no place left for memories. The first years of their married life were swept away from their thoughts. . . . It is a great misfortune for two people living together to have the ties which bind them to their past love broken! The image of their love is a safeguard against the disappointment and hostility which inevitably succeed the first years of tenderness. . . . The power to spend largely had brought Jacqueline, both in Paris and abroad—(for now that they were rich they often traveled)—into touch with a class of rich and useless people, whose society gave her a sort of contempt for the rest of mankind, all those who had work to do. With her marvelous power of adaptation, she very quickly caught the color of these sterile and rotten men and women. She could not fight against it. At once she became refractory and irritable, regarding the idea that it was possible—and right—to be happy in her domestic duties and the *aurea mediocritus* as mere "vulgar manners." She had lost even the capacity to understand the bygone days when she had so generously given herself in love.

Olivier was not strong enough to fight against it. He, too, had changed. He had given up his work, and had no fixed and compulsory occupation. He wrote, and the balance of his life was adjusted by it. Till then he had suffered because he could not give his whole life to art. Now that he could do so he felt utterly lost in the cloudy world. Art which is not also a profession, and supported by a healthy practical life, art which knows not the necessity of earning the daily bread, loses the best part of its force and its reality. It is only the flower of luxury. It is not—(what in the greatest, the only great, artists it is)—the sacred fruit of human suffering.—Olivier felt a disinclination to work, a desire to ask: "What is the good of it?" There was nothing to make him write: he would let his pen run on, he dawdled about, he had lost his bearings. He had lost touch with his own class of men and women patiently plowing the hard furrow of their lives. He had fallen into a different world, where he was ill at ease, though on the whole he did not find it unpleasant. Weak, amiable, and curious, he fell complacently to observing that world which was entirely lacking in consistency, though it was not without charm; and he did not see that little by little he was becoming contaminated by it: it was undermining his faith.

No doubt the transformation was not so rapid in him as it was in Jacqueline.—Women have the terrible privilege of being able suddenly to undergo a complete change. The way in which they suddenly die and then as suddenly come to life again is appalling to those who love them. And yet it is perfectly natural for a human being who is full of life without the curb of the will not to be to-morrow what it is to-day. A woman is like running water. The man who loves her must follow the stream or divert it into the channel of his own life. In both cases there must be change. But it is a dangerous experience, and no man really knows love until he has gone through it. And its harmony is so delicate during the first years of married life that often the very smallest change in either husband or wife is enough to destroy their whole relationship. How much more perilous, then, is a sudden change of fortune or of circumstance! They must needs be very strong—or very indifferent to each other—to withstand it.

Jacqueline and Olivier were neither indifferent nor strong. They began to see each other in a new light: and the face of the beloved became strange to them. When first they made the sad discovery, they hid it from each other in loving pity: for they still loved each other. Olivier took refuge in his work, and by applying himself to it regularly, though with even less conviction than before, won through to tranquillity. Jacqueline had nothing. She did nothing. She would stay in bed for hours, or dawdle over her toilette, sitting idly, half dressed, motionless, lost in thought: and gradually a dumb misery crept over her like an icy mist. She could not break away from the fixed idea of love. . . . Love! Of things human the most Divine when it is the gift of self, a passionate and blind sacrifice. But when it is no more than the pursuit of happiness, it is the most senseless and the most elusive. . . . It was impossible for her to conceive any other aim in life. In moments of benevolence she had tried to take an interest in the sorrows of other people: but she could not do it. The sufferings of others filled her with an ungovernable feeling of repulsion: her nerves were not strong enough to bear them. To appease her conscience she had occasionally done something which looked like philanthropy: but the result had been tame and disappointing.

"You see," she would say to Christophe, "when one tries to do good one does harm. It is much better not to try. I'm not cut out for it."

Christophe would look at her: and he would think of a girl he had met, a selfish, immoral little grisette, absolutely incapable of real affection, though, as soon as she saw anybody suffering, she was filled with motherly pity for him, even though she had not cared a rap for him before, even though he were a stranger to her. She was not abashed by the most horrible tasks, and she would even take a strange pleasure in doing those which demanded the greatest self-denial. She never stopped to think about it: she seemed to find in it a use for her obscure, hereditary, and eternally unexpressed idealism: her soul was atrophied as far as the rest of her life was concerned, but at such rare moments it breathed again: it gave her a sense of well-being and inward joy to be able to allay suffering: and her joy was then almost misplaced.—The goodness of that woman, who was selfish, the selfishness of Jacqueline, who was good in spite of it, were neither vice nor virtue, but in both cases only a matter of health. But the first was in the better case.

Jacqueline was crushed by the mere idea of suffering. She would have preferred death to physical illness. She would have preferred death to the loss of either of her sources of joy: her beauty or her youth. That she should not have all the happiness to which she thought herself entitled,—(for she believed in happiness, it was a matter of faith with her, wholeheartedly and absurdly, a religious belief),—and that others should have more happiness than herself, would have seemed to her the most horrible injustice. Happiness was not only a religion to her; it was a virtue. To be unhappy seemed to her to be an infirmity. Her whole life gradually came to revolve round that principle. Her real character had broken through the veils of idealism in which in girlish bashful modesty she had enshrouded herself. In her reaction against the idealism of the past she began to see things in a hard, crude light. Things were only true for her in proportion as they coincided with the opinion of the world and the smoothness of life. She had reached her mother's state of mind: she went to church, and practised religion punctiliously and indifferently. She never stopped to ask herself whether there was any real truth in it: she had other more positive mental difficulties: and she would think of the mystical revolt of her childhood with pitying irony.—And yet her new positivism was no more real than her old idealism. She forced it. She was neither angel nor brute. She was just a poor bored woman.

She was bored, bored, bored: and her boredom was all the greater in that she could not excuse herself on the score of not being loved, or by saying that she could not endure Olivier. Her life seemed to be stunted, walled up, with no future prospect: she longed for a new happiness that should be perpetually renewed; her longing was utterly childish, for it never took into account her indifferent capacity for happiness. She was like so many women living idle lives with idle husbands, who have every reason to be happy, and yet never cease torturing themselves. There are many such couples, who are rich and blessed with health and lovely children, and clever and capable of feeling fine things, and possessed of the power to keep themselves employed and to do good, and to enrich their own lives and the lives of others. And they spend their time in moaning and groaning that they do not love each other, that they love some one else, or that they do not love somebody else—perpetually taken up with themselves, and their sentimental or sensual relations, and their pretended right to happiness, their conflicting egoism, and arguing, arguing, arguing, playing with their sham grand passion, their sham great suffering, and in the end believing in it, and—suffering. . . . If only some one would say to them:

"You are not in the least interesting. It is indecent to be so sorry for yourselves when you have so many good reasons for being happy!"

If only some one would take away their money, their health, all the marvelous gifts of which they are so unworthy! If only some one would once more lay the yoke of poverty and real suffering on these slaves who are incapable of being free and are driven mad by their liberty! If they had to earn their bread in the sweat of their brows, they would be glad enough to eat it. And if they were to come face to face with grim suffering, they would never dare to play with the sham. . . .

But, when all is said and done, they do suffer. They are ill. How, then, are they not to be pitied?—Poor Jacqueline was quite innocent, as innocent in drifting apart from Olivier as Olivier was in not holding her. She was what Nature had made her. She did not know that marriage is a challenge to Nature, and that, when one has thrown down the gauntlet to Nature, it is only to be expected that she will arise and begin valiantly to wage the combat which one has provoked. She saw that she had been mistaken, and she was exasperated with herself; and her disillusion turned to hostility towards the thing she had loved, Olivier's faith, which had also been her own. An intelligent woman has, much more than a man, moments of an intuitive perception of things eternal: but it is more difficult for her to maintain her grip on them. Once a man has come by the idea of the eternal, he feeds it with his life-blood. A woman uses it to feed her own life: she absorbs it, and does not create it. She must always be throwing fresh fuel into her heart and mind: she cannot be self-sufficing. And if she cannot believe and love, she must destroy—except she possess the supreme virtue of serenity.

Jacqueline had believed passionately in a union based on a common faith, in the happiness of struggling and suffering together in accomplishment. But she had only believed in that endeavor, that faith, while they were gilded by the sun of love: and as the sun died down she saw them as barren, gloomy mountains standing out against the empty sky: and her strength failed her, so that she could go no farther on the road: what was the good of reaching the summit? What was there on the other side? It was a gigantic phantom and a snare! . . . Jacqueline could not understand how Olivier could go on being taken in by such fantastic notions which consumed life: and she began to tell herself that he was not very clever, nor very much alive. She was stifling in his atmosphere, in which she could not breathe, and the instinct of self-preservation drove her on to the attack, in self-defense. She strove to scatter and bring to dust the injurious beliefs of the man she still loved: she used every weapon of irony and seductive pleasure in her armory: she trammeled him with the tendrils of her desires and her petty cares: she longed to make him a reflection of herself, . . . herself who knew neither what she wanted nor what she was! She was humiliated by Olivier's want of success: and she did not care whether it were just or unjust; for she had come to believe that the only thing which saves a man of talent from failure is success. Olivier was oppressed by his consciousness of her doubts, and his strength was sapped by it. However, he struggled on as best he could, as so many men have struggled, and will struggle, for the most part vainly, in the unequal conflict in which the selfish instinct of the woman upholds itself against the man's intellectual egoism by playing upon his weakness, his dishonesty, and his common sense, which is the name with which he disguises the wear and tear of life and his own cowardice.—At least, Jacqueline and Olivier were better than the majority of such combatants. For he would never have betrayed his ideal, as thousands of men do who drift with the demands of their laziness, their vanity, and their loves, into renunciation of their immortal souls. And, if he had done so, Jacqueline would have despised him. But, in her blindness, she strove to destroy that force in Olivier, which was hers also, their common safeguard: and by an instinctive strategical movement she undermined the friendship by which that force was upheld.

NOTE ON CHARLES MORGAN'S

"THE FOUNTAIN"

Lewis Alison, a British officer interned in Holland during the latter part of World War I, lives at a small estate (Enkendaal), where he is a guest so long as he makes no effort to escape to England. The Van Leyden family are lavish hosts.

Lewis meets Julie Narwitz, an English girl whose German husband has sent her to Holland for the duration. The growing love affair between these two is watched with hatred by Sophie, thirty-five years old, an unmarried member of the Van Leyden family. Lewis fears the implications of his love for Julie, and seeks to integrate it with a mystical philosophy.

Julie's husband, Rupert, arrives from Germany. He is a dying man, broken by pain and greatly aged. Although Rupert is ignorant of Julie's love for Lewis, a sensitivity deeper than that given by experience conditions him as he speaks to Julie.

Rupert and Lewis become close friends. Julie and Lewis are terrorized by the thought that if Rupert knows of their guilty passion, it is their love that will kill him.

Our selection begins as Rupert, after his unconsciousness, finds out that his universe has dissolved—the German society to which he belongs as well as his life with Julie.

CHARLES MORGAN

The Fountain

THE maritime tradition of Britain is safe in the hands of Charles Morgan. Born in 1894, he was educated for the Royal Navy and only secondly found his way to Brasenose College at Oxford (onetime home of the exotic stylist, Walter Pater). He entered the Navy as a cadet at thirteen, later served in the China station, then returned to the Navy in World War I and in the 1940's served in Naval Intelligence, at the Admiralty. His maritime experience inspired his unforgettable pictures of Dutch estuaries and of watery skies. Morgan's literary fame spread in 1932 with *The Fountain.* That it was beautiful, accomplished, written with rare style, was granted by those who thought his people too noble, and his sentiments too refined. An English wife of a Prussian aristocrat meets an English officer interned in Holland towards the end of the last war. Their love is physical, unescapable. Von Narwitz, her husband, dying, while the German Empire was crumbling, forgives through almost unearthly understanding. Morgan has since sought to rival *The Fountain* in *Sparkenbroke* and *The Voyage.* He is dramatic critic of the London Times.

IT was strange to him to hear it said that he had been unconscious, for, though the experience through which he had passed would submit to none of the forms of thought and could not therefore be described even to himself, it had not been forgotten; the spiritual impression of it remained, as the impression of a poem may remain of which the words are no more remembered. That it had been active and continuous he did not doubt, and, though his thought could not now encompass it—thought being an emanation of sense and this experience a conclusion from different premises—it was for him a reality so far transcending the appearances of his present state that he felt himself to be indeed a visitor from another world.

A desire not altogether to lose contact with this supreme experience from which he had been recalled dragged at him like a vanishing memory and produced in him, during the following days, a low delirium which was attributed by others to the pain and fever that he endured.

In fact, the pain and fever had little part in it, they like all else of this world being to him now in a manner fictitious, as though they were the sufferings of a body not his own; and he took no account of them until he found himself, as his doctor said, rallying, or, as it appeared to his own consciousness, slipping back into life. To slip back finally, to forget what he had known and that he had known it; to accept delusion again and be no more possessed of that farther reality to which he felt himself to have been admitted, became the fear of his heart, and he asked Lewis, who visited him often, whether he supposed that Lazarus, raised from the dead, was in complete oblivion of what, in death, he had seen and known, or continued upon earth in the bliss and torment of unseizable memories. He asked this question in many forms, continually reverting to the subject of it, until Lewis, who had at first supposed it to be the afterwash of delirium and had not seriously applied his mind to it, at last perceived its personal significance.

But Julie, when she saw that Rupert's former will to live was gone from him, supposed that he despaired bitterly of this life, not guessing that he hungered for another as an exile for his own remembered country. "You must rouse him," the doctor said. "He is a great fighter, but he is fighting no longer," and one night in the third week of October, having lain awake until she could no more endure the burden of silence, she rose and went, as she believed, to her necessary confessional, and kneeling beside his pillow stretched her arm across it, and took his head in the crook of her arm gently, and with her fingers touched his face.

"Rupert," she said, "don't shut me out."

She was warm from her bed and his face so cold against the softness of her arm that his silence filled her with sudden terror, but he answered her: "You will make yourself ill, Julie. You are uncovered. The night's cold."

"It's not winter yet."

"No," he said, "not yet."

The bleak futility of their words, the ungovernable, inconsequent words of a dream, stood across her mind as a barrier between her and the confession she would make, and she said: "You know what I have done, Rupert. Is there nothing I can do now?"

"My dear, all that is far away. I am dying."

"No, no," she whispered. "Your voice sounds as if you were already dead. You must not go in that bitterness."

"Not in bitterness," he answered. "In eagerness and in hunger."

"For death?" She laid her cheek upon his pillow. "Though you know it already, let me say what I must say, Rupert. I have been silent so long. When it began between Lewis and me, it seemed—"

"No," he said. "You are telling me of this world and the body."

"Yes. I—"

He put his hand upon her in restraint. "Julie, do not make me remember you."

From that she fell away and knelt beside the bed, not touching it. "Is even the memory hateful?"

A little dark cry issued from his throat as he perceived in what way she had misunderstood him.

"It is not hatred that makes me wish to forget," he said. "But my love for you—which does not cease to be love, Julie—love in all fulness by this world's reckoning—is among the things I must leave behind. It held me to life; now it must consent that I go."

"Because I betrayed you?"

"Not as you mean it, Julie. Do not blame or hate yourself for my death. There was a time when it seemed that you had been false and cruel. I could see nothing but your falseness and cruelty. I wanted to destroy the life that held the knowledge of them. It was in that mood I went to the island. I did not mean to come back. In what I was changed I cannot tell you; that is the last secret, which I cannot tell even to myself. But the breath of that change is upon my eyelids, bidding my eyes open, and the warmth of it in my soul like the sun in an apple yet upon the tree, and the taste of it on my lips like the taste of salt waves in the inland air. And what I have tasted shall not be denied me. What I leave behind—suffering and love—is becoming a shadow. You are becoming a shadow and my love for you a story that was told me long ago. Let it be so. If I am to have peace and not fall back utterly into the despairs and raptures of that story, you must consent, and willingly let me to go, without remorse or weeping or condemnation. For even now, Julie, you might recall me. With you, I might read all that story again and believe it true. Even now, while you kneel beside me, the memory of it flows up. Do not compel me to remember you."

"What shall I do to give you peace?" she asked.

"Let this be an end between us. Afterwards, for the time that remains, think that I am already dead. Let me be moved from here to the little room to which I was first taken and where, one night, happier than I have ever been, I fell asleep with my head upon your breast."

"You mean that I am not to see you again?"

"No, Julie, I do not mean that. But when I am able to die, I would go freely and alone, not held by the one farewell that has power to hold me. Let us say good-bye now and become again separate beings without call upon each other. In our own hearts let this be our parting, that we may not be torn apart in the last agony or the last failure of the body."

He paused and said: "I married you without your love. That was a great wrong."

She was speechless, and he spoke again: " Now, Julie, goodbye. May God keep you."

And she drew herself up to him and took his face between her hands in the darkness. "Come back to me, Rupert. I shall not betray you." Though his hand seized her wrist, he made no reply and, a finality greater than her desire for pardon shrouding her will, she could no more entreat him. "Remember a little, then, in this moment," she said, "before you forget for ever."

He drew her down and kissed her. "I remember that without you there would be no world to leave." Holding her shoulder, he asked: "We are at peace?"

"At peace, dear Rupert," she said, struggling to see and remember his face.

"Then let us kiss once more, as travellers setting out."

When she had done as he asked and knew that her lips would not touch his again and that between them the recognitions of love were ended, she felt him take her hand and kiss it. Then, knowing herself released, she turned away and lay down upon her own bed apart from him. She believed that all night she would listen to the waterfall, but, in an instant, sleep with a sigh had taken her. . . .

And Lewis said: " 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' "

He asked no more that day, but, feeling himself to be in the presence of one who was the bringer of gifts, he returned often to the subject and asked for guidance. Narwitz answered that each man must find his own way, that there was none prescribed. "But what you have in your mind," he added, "is the choice, always uppermost in the minds of men, between the acceptance and refusal of earthly love. You know, as I have long known and as has been sufficiently proved to me, that all spiritual achievement is, in essence, solitary. Women, when we lie with them, look into our faces and ask what we were thinking of in the moment of sensual climax and in the succeeding moment of release. They have seen isolation in our expressions, but they wish us to answer that it was of them we were thinking. We may answer so, but it is not true. The fact that we love them excludes them momentarily and gives us freedom, not from them only, but from our own bodily shells. It is a very simple paradox that though, in that instant, we might remain conscious of a woman to whom we were indifferent—that is, remain earthbound by her flesh and our own, we escape in inexpressible wonder from a woman we love. She has power to release us, that is all; it is a miraculous power.

"You see, just as we teach children to have good manners and to give place to others—in a word, to be courteous and self-denying—so we, while we are in our philosophic childhood, must be self-denying and must love. But self-denial, though a great and necessary virtue, is a virtue to be transcended and left behind, and love also, for love is a distraction from personal unity—it prevents the coming together of the soul. Yet—and this is a deeper paradox—it is on earth necessary to the growth of the soul. To reject it, while we are in a condition to require it, is to stunt ourselves with asceticism and to grasp at spiritual independence before our time. Love, a form of suffering, is, like pain and ambition and loyalty and all profound emotional experience, a form of discipline, being a part of life, itself a discipline; and like all earthly gains it is a designed prelude to loss. When we know intellectually that loss is freedom, then we are philosophers; when loss has become freedom, then we are baptized in wonder and are fit to die. Has the death of Jesus any other significance that is unchanging, whether he was human or divine?

"But I am tired," Narwitz added. "I shall be able to speak little more with you."

It was the last of his conversations with Lewis on the subject which had interwoven their lives. Henceforward, though Lewis visited him often, Narwitz spoke little, having fallen back into himself. His nurse and doctor had become hands and voices. The Baron he could still welcome, for the old man would talk to him of sport and the affairs of Enkendaal as if the blaze in Europe were of little account in the van Leyden generations; but the others—Allard; his wife, Marietje; Goof; the Baroness herself—were of a hopeful, persistent and ardent neutrality that was for him the clink of words. The war, they assured him, had not been fought in vain, for there would be no more wars; Germany, reconstituted, would enter swiftly into the brotherhood of nations; the years to come would be years of healing and peace. They added with the air of schoolmasters that the world had learnt its lesson.

Among them Sophie was an exception. She was without complacency and did not speak of war. Standing at the window, with her face turned away from him, she would talk of trivialities, twisting her hands; then go abruptly, always without having said what she had come to say. But at last, unable to abandon the task she had undertaken, though suffering agony in the discharge of it, she did not go, and he became aware of her voice at his pillow, her agitated, frightened desperate voice, and of the sound of her breath. She was pouring out her secret—that Julie had betrayed him, that she could prove it—could *prove* it; that she had known for months; that Ella had known. "They have all lied to you!" she cried. "All! Lewis as well." There was something pitiable in her agitation; she seemed to be confessing a sin of her own that had sickened her conscience and corroded her mind; and when Narwitz, having brushed her tale aside as a thing not to be believed, laid his hand upon hers as though she were a frightened child, he knew that she was glad of his disbelief. But she snatched her hand away and fell into reiterated accusations, which he continued to disregard. Suddenly she broke off and, covering her face, fled towards the door. There she turned and confronted him, her eyes distended and her lower jaw moving laterally to and fro. "Do you know what else they have hidden from you?" she cried. "Do you know what else? Ludendorff has been dismissed. There's a mutiny at Kiel. And now the Emperor has run away. He is going to the Bentincks at Amerongen. He has left your army to fend for itself. Do you disbelieve that? Do you think I'm lying now?" She swayed, watching him, waiting for the effect of her words; then, all the fierceness being suddenly emptied from her, she was filled with remorse, and tears began to flow down her cheeks. At last, in terror of herself and of what she had done, she pressed her knuckles into the sides of her mouth, and twisted her head and shoulders away from him, and went out.

It became plain to Narwitz on the evening of that day that he had not long to wait. On the lassitude following the next attack, he would go out as on a tide, and would go out alone. The thought of frightened and embarrassed people gathered round his bed to watch him die was deeply repugnant to him. He said this to Julie, and, when she asked whether she might not be with him at the end, he replied that they had already said farewell to each other and that he wished, if the nurse and doctor could be excluded, to endure the final pang in solitude.

While the November days went by, it seemed to him that he lay in a womb, eager for the summons of birth. His mind, though streaked with premonitions of the life he was about to enter, was deeply coloured by memories of the past. Still he asked for news, and the spread of revolt, first to Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen, then to Leipzig and Munich themselves was admitted to him. But the names of the Centre and the South fell away. He had returned to the country and the marshes familiar to his childhood. He was astride a great horse of his father's, feeling the stretch of his legs and rocking in the saddle because he could get no grip on it. He was out in the woods, startling and delighting himself with legends, and making of each tree an adventure, endowed by his imagination with terrors and wonders. Over his bed stooped again the promise of life; everything was fresh and shining; Nature had been made for him, the hush of evening and the last flight of birds were his, the hours, the days, the years were waiting for him only. Even in sadness—and his childhood was not free from it—there was a springing emotion, an evidence of life, a pulse; and this pulse moved again in him now and he ached with longing for he knew not what—for an enchantment that was being woven for him alone, for a music that would be poured upon him from the air. And there appeared before him a girl whose beauty charged him with power. She gathered into herself his childhood and his old age; she absorbed his being and released him, as prayer released him, from the prison of his own individuality. Gazing at the lamp beside his bed, he found it impossible to know whether she was of the past that he was leaving or of the future, into which, out of the darkness of this womb, he was to be born; in her, past and future were inseparable; she was his origin and his redemption. And when, on the evening of November 9, the womb in which he lay contracted upon him, and there was neither light nor breathing, and shrewd eyes were thrust into the core of his agony, he saw Julie among the eyes, and recognized her and stretched out his hand to her, for he and she were running together from pursuers through a brilliant wood. She took handfuls of darkness out of a bag swinging at her hip and threw them behind her. Soon they had shaken off their pursuers and were alone in the wood. They fell asleep and, while he slept, he knew that she rose secretly and went away, but when he awoke she was beside him and her going away seemed to have been a dream.

But he was not in a wood and the curved slice of light on the clock-glass above the lintel told him that morning had not yet come. The nurse was lifting him in his bed; there was a hiss from the cylinder of oxygen, and a smell of rubber and vulcanite was stronger than the soapy smell of her hands. "You were dreaming," she said, and he answered: "Whatever it was the dream has done me good," for his mind was clear and he knew that very soon, perhaps before daylight, he would die. But time passed. The gilding on the clock began to glisten and footsteps passing his door told that the Castle was awake.

From a light hovering on the edge of consciousness, he awoke and asked the time. It was eleven o'clock. He asked where Julie was and was told that she and the doctor had just gone from the room. He wished his wife and the English officer to come to him, he said, and to be left alone with them a little while. . . .

When they were beside his bed, Julie on her knees with her face hidden in the coverlet and Lewis standing opposite her on his right hand, he touched her and said:

"You have loved each other?"

She answered: "Yes."

"With more than the body?"

"With more than the body."

He breathed heavily and was silent. Lewis searched his face in anxiety, but the long silence seemed not to be of exhaustion but of thought. His head was unmoved but his eyes turned from one to the other.

"But not evilly—not evilly towards you. Can you understand that?" Julie cried, looking at him with entreaty and interlacing her fingers with his. "Neither he—nor I—knew you until you came back."

"It is true," Lewis said. "We did not know ourselves, I think, until your endurance taught us."

Narwitz withdrew his hand from Julie's grasp and laid it upon her head, weighing down her head, as though he could not endure to look into her face and would have it hidden from him.

"I am not asking these questions in jealousy," he said. "From that agony I am absolved." And afterwards, looking at Lewis he said: "Nor do I hate you, Alison; indeed, you are the last friend I shall make in this world. Hatred and jealousy and possessive love, perhaps all earthly love, belong to the childhood of the soul, as you know. You are among the few men living who understand that they are to be outgrown." He drew in his breath with pain. "And I have learned that there are experiences which quell them. There are experiences," he added with a smile, "which take the place of philosophy."

Julie stirred at his side, urging him to rest.

"I shall have time to rest," he answered, "and I would not rest in doubt. Give me a few minutes in silence. Then let me speak."

"Tell me one thing," Julie said.

"What is it?"

She straightened her body. "Rupert, do you remember, long ago you said—long ago, in Germany, when we were first married, you said—" She could not speak. Her fingers were locked in the coverlet. At last, in a voice shrill but very small, she continued: "You said to me: 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Have I betrayed you in that? In that, too?"

"It was a charge," he answered, "that you could not accept, for you never loved me."

"Until now."

A light entered his face. He raised his hand a few inches, unsteadily, perhaps to cover his eyes, but the movement defeated his strength.

"Even that—is it possible—now," he whispered and, relaxing the weak tension of his limbs, lay in an ivory stillness, an enchantment of memory being upon him. At last he roused himself and for the first time moved his head, drawing down Lewis's eyes to his own.

"I must be brief," he said, "and say crudely what I have to say. I shall not spare your feelings or my own. Julie never loved me in the past with mind or body. Since my return, she has pitied me and she has adored my suffering, as though I were other than I am and raised up on a cross. You, too, have felt—friendship towards me for the same reason? Is that true? . . . But it is you, not I, who have made her capable of her pity and adoration. She has loved you, not me. Often she has lain naked against me, thinking to give life to me. But it has been her torment and penance. It has been my torment also and my penance." He closed his eyes and continued: "I see the past and the future clearly. There seems to be no division between them. Whether I shall continue in my own person—a separate consciousness—in another world, I do not know. As to that, I have no faith to guide me. But I shall continue here in your thoughts and lives, not as a cause of guilt—" He hesitated. "Not as a cause of guilt but as an inevitable consequence."

"O Rupert," Julie cried, "can you not forgive us?"

"Forgive you and set you free? My Julie, forgive is a word for the gods, and freedom an attribute of the gods. Here nothing is certain but fulfilment and consequence. We sow and reap; and if we fail to reap our own harvest when it is ripe, then afterwards we reap it when it is poisoned. While we live, we must live our dreams. There is no other way of passing beyond them into reality. . . . Come nearer to me. It's hard to see you. Nearer, Julie, nearer. And you, Alison, nearer."

A silvery pallor had touched his eyelids and was spreading like a curtain over the middle and the lower parts of his face. "Do not leave me," he said. "It will pass." Julie gave him water silently and waited.

"My dream," he began, "was one that couldn't be lived. You were to replace every loss. While you lived, nothing could die. My friends, my country—all were poured into you. When no help was left, you were my help. Now—" A rigor shook him. "I must make haste," he whispered, and lay still.

Then, in a stronger voice, to Lewis:

"You love her. You have made her. She is the bridge to your own truth. Will you guard and keep her?"

And to Julie: "My beloved one, there is no other way that is not barren. We forgive ourselves in this world by working out our forgiveness."

And to both: "Give me your hands. That shall be your oath."

His hand lay upon theirs.

"It is your betrothal," he said. "You are not pledged to the dead but to yourselves. Your own vision must confirm it."

He lifted his hand to Julie's face and felt it, like a blind man. "You are crying. . . . I shall not see your face again. It is strange, I hope that I may forget your face before I die. . . . Now, leave me. Call no one. Say that I am asleep."

She would have kissed him, but when he felt her touch upon his shoulders, he said: "Leave me. I wish to forget even your kiss. . . . I wish to be alone."

When they were far from him, he asked:

"Am I alone?" And after a long interval, he said: "My Julie. . . ."

She did not stir, nor Lewis at her side.

And he cried aloud and said in his own language: "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit," and when he had spoken thus, he gave up the ghost.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Marriage à la Mode

Born in New Zealand of a wealthy banking family, Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was educated in England and there married the writer John Middleton Murry. She acquired a taste for Continental literature, especially for Chekhov, of whom she became an adept, rather than an imitator. Ill-health compelled her to make repeated visits to the Riviera; ultimately, she sought hope in a mystic cult in Fontainebleau, where she died. Writing at the time when naturalism was on the wane, she held artistic truth to be a subjective re-creation; the more intense the artist's sensitivity, the greater the likelihood that his projections matched the conjectured real world. She represented, with simplicity, a traditional view of housebound women that intuition leads to understanding. A combination of the fragile artist and sheltered woman, she expressed her attitude in modern phrases and her writing is the result of deep, sincere striving, is pathetic, always tender; she is an aquarellist, exquisite in scenery and sensitive in mood, limited in feminine character, and her men are only outlines.

ON his way to the station William remembered with a fresh pang of disappointment that he was taking nothing down to the kiddies. Poor little chaps! It was hard lines on them. Their first words always were as they ran to greet him, "What have you got for me, daddy?" and he had nothing. He would have to buy them some sweets at the station. But that was what he had done for the past four Saturdays; their faces had fallen last time when they saw the same old boxes produced again.

And Paddy had said, "I had red ribbing on mine *bee*-fore!"

And Johnny had said, "It's always pink on mine. I hate pink."

But what was William to do? The affair wasn't so easily settled. In the old days, of course, he would have taken a taxi off to a decent toyshop and chosen them something in five minutes. But nowadays they had Russian toys, French toys, Serbian toys—toys from God knows where. It was over a year since Isabel had scrapped the old donkeys and engines and so on because they were so "dreadfully sentimental" and "so appallingly bad for the babies' sense of form."

"It's so important," the new Isabel had explained, "that they should like the right things from the very beginning. It saves so much time later on. Really, if the poor pets have to spend their infant years staring at these horrors, one can imagine them growing up and asking to be taken to the Royal Academy."

And she spoke as though a visit to the Royal Academy was certain immediate death to any one. . . .

"Well, I don't know," said William slowly. "When I was their age I used to go to bed hugging an old towel with a knot in it."

The new Isabel looked at him, her eyes narrowed, her lips apart.

"*Dear* William! I'm sure you did!" She laughed in the new way.

Sweets it would have to be, however, thought William gloomily, fishing in his pocket for change for the taxi-man. And he saw the kiddies handing the boxes round—they were awfully generous little chaps—while Isabel's precious friends didn't hesitate to help themselves. . . .

What about fruit? William hovered before a stall just inside the station. What about a melon each? Would they have to share that, too? Or a pineapple for Pad, and a melon for Johnny? Isabel's friends could hardly go sneaking up to the nursery at the children's meal-times. All the same, as he bought the melon William had a horrible vision of one of Isabel's young poets lapping up a slice, for some reason, behind the nursery door.

With his two very awkward parcels he strode off to his train. The platform was crowded, the train was in. Doors banged open and shut. There came such a loud hissing from the engine that people looked dazed as they scurried to and fro. William made straight for a first-class smoker, stowed away his suit-case and parcels, and taking a huge wad of papers out of his inner pocket, he flung down in the corner and began to read.

"Our client moreover is positive. . . . We are inclined to reconsider . . . in the event of—" Ah, that was better. William pressed back his flattened hair and stretched his legs across the carriage floor. The familiar dull gnawing in his breast quietened down. "With regard to our decision—" He took out a blue pencil and scored a paragraph slowly.

Two men came in, stepped across him, and made for the farther corner. A young fellow swung his golf clubs into the rack and sat down opposite. The train gave a gentle lurch, they were off. William glanced up and saw the hot, bright station slipping away. A red-faced girl raced along by the carriages, there was something strained and almost desperate in the way she waved and called. "Hysterical!"

thought William dully. Then a greasy, black-faced workman at the end of the platform grinned at the passing train. And William thought, "A filthy life!" and went back to his papers.

When he looked up again there were fields, and beasts standing for shelter under the dark trees. A wide river, with naked children splashing in the shallows, glided into sight and was gone again. The sky shone pale, and one bird drifted high like a dark fleck in a jewel.

"We have examined our client's correspondence files. . . ." The last sentence he had read echoed in his mind. "We have examined . . ." William hung on to that sentence, but it was no good; it snapped in the middle, and the fields, the sky, the sailing bird, the water, all said, "Isabel." The same thing happened every Saturday afternoon. When he was on his way to meet Isabel there began those countless imaginary meetings. She was at the station, standing just a little apart from everybody else; she was sitting in the open taxi outside; she was at the garden gate; walking across the parched grass; at the door, or just inside the hall.

And her clear, light voice said, "It's William," or "Hillo, William!" or "So William has come!" He touched her cool hand, her cool cheek.

The exquisite freshness of Isabel! When he had been a little boy, it was his delight to run into the garden after a shower of rain and shake the rose-bush over him. Isabel was that rose-bush, petal-soft, sparkling and cool. And he was still that little boy. But there was no running into the garden now, no laughing and shaking. The dull, persistent gnawing in his breast started again. He drew up his legs, tossed the papers aside, and shut his eyes.

"What is it, Isabel? What is it?" he said tenderly. They were in their bedroom in the new house. Isabel sat on a painted stool before the dressing-table that was strewn with little black and green boxes.

"What is what, William?" And she bent forward, and her fine light hair fell over her cheeks.

"Ah, you know!" He stood in the middle of the strange room and he felt a stranger. At that Isabel wheeled round quickly and faced him.

"Oh, William!" she cried imploringly, and she held up the hairbrush: "Please! Please don't be so dreadfully stuffy and—tragic. You're always saying or looking or hinting that I've changed. Just because I've got to know really congenial people, and go about more, and am frightfully keen on—on everything, you behave as though I'd—" Isabel tossed back her hair and laughed—"killed our love or something. It's so awfully absurd"—she bit her lip—"and it's so maddening, William. Even this new house and the servants you grudge me."

"Isabel!"

"Yes, yes, it's true in a way," said Isabel quickly. "You think they are another bad sign. Oh, I know you do. I feel it," she said softly, "every time you come up the stairs. But we couldn't have gone on living in that other poky little hole, William. Be practical, at least! Why, there wasn't enough room for the babies even."

No, it was true. Every morning when he came back from chambers it was to find the babies with Isabel in the back drawing-room. They were having rides on the leopard skin thrown over the sofa back, or they were playing shops with Isabel's desk for a counter, or Pad was sitting on the hearthrug rowing away for dear life with a little brass fire shovel, while Johnny shot at pirates with the tongs. Every evening they each had a pick-a-back up the narrow stairs to their fat old Nanny.

Yes, he supposed it was a poky little house. A little white house with blue curtains and a window-box of petunias. William met their friends at the door with "Seen our petunias? Pretty terrific for London, don't you think?"

But the imbecile thing, the absolutely extraordinary thing was that he hadn't the slightest idea that Isabel wasn't as happy as he. God, what blindness! He hadn't the remotest notion in those days that she really hated that inconvenient little house, that she thought the fat Nanny was ruining the babies, that she was desperately lonely, pining for new people and new music and pictures and so on. If they hadn't gone to that studio party at Moira Morrison's—if Moira Morrison hadn't said as they were leaving, "I'm going to rescue your wife, selfish man. She's like an exquisite little Titania"—if Isabel hadn't gone with Moira to Paris—if—if . . .

The train stopped at another station. Bettingford. Good heavens! They'd be there in ten minutes. William stuffed the papers back into his pockets; the young man opposite had long since disappeared. Now the other two got out. The late afternoon sun shone on women in cotton frocks and little sunburnt, barefoot children. It blazed on a silky yellow flower with coarse leaves which sprawled over a bank of rock. The air ruffling through the window smelled of the sea. Had Isabel the same crowd with her this week-end, wondered William?

And he remembered the holidays they used to have, the four of them, with a little farm girl, Rose, to look after the babies. Isabel wore a jersey and her hair in a plait; she looked about fourteen. Lord! how his nose used to peel! And the amount they ate, and the amount they slept in that immense feather bed with their feet locked together. . . . William couldn't help a grim smile as he thought of Isabel's horror if she knew the full extent of his sentimentality.

* * * * * * *

"Hillo, William!" She was at the station after all, standing just as he had imagined, apart from the others, and—William's heart leapt—she was alone.

"Hallo, Isabel!" William stared. He thought she looked so beautiful that he had to say something, "You look very cool."

"Do I?" said Isabel. "I don't feel very cool. Come along, your horrid old train is late. The taxi's outside." She put her hand lightly on his arm as they passed the ticket collector. "We've all come to meet you," she said. "But we've left Bobby Kane at the sweet shop, to be called for."

"Oh!" said William. It was all he could say for the moment.

There in the glare waited the taxi, with Bill Hunt and Dennis Green sprawling on one side, their hats tilted over their faces, while on the other, Moira Morrison, in a bonnet like a huge strawberry, jumped up and down.

"No ice! No ice! No ice!" she shouted gaily.

And Dennis chimed in from under his hat. "*Only* to be had from the fishmonger's."

And Bill Hunt, emerging, added, "With *whole* fish in it."

"Oh, what a bore!" wailed Isabel. And she explained to William how they had been chasing round the town for ice while she waited for him. "Simply everything is running down the steep cliffs into the sea, beginning with the butter."

"We shall have to anoint ourselves with the butter," said Dennis. "May thy head, William, lack not ointment."

"Look here," said William, "how are we going to sit? I'd better get up by the driver."

"No, Bobby Kane's by the driver," said Isabel. "You're to sit between Moira and me." The taxi started. "What have you got in those mysterious parcels?"

"De-cap-it-ated heads!" said Bill Hunt, shuddering beneath his hat.

"Oh, fruit!" Isabel sounded very pleased. "Wise William! A melon and a pineapple. How too nice!"

"No, wait a bit," said William, smiling. But he really was anxious. "I brought them down for the kiddies."

"Oh, my dear!" Isabel laughed, and slipped her hand through his arm. "They'd be rolling in agonies if they were to eat them. No"—she patted his hand—"you must bring them something next time. I refuse to part with my pineapple."

"Cruel Isabel! Do let me smell it!" said Moira. She flung her arms across William appealingly. "Oh!" The strawberry bonnet fell forward: she sounded quite faint.

"A Lady in Love with a Pineapple," said Dennis, as the taxi drew up before a little shop with a striped blind. Out came Bobby Kane, his arms full of little packets.

"I do hope they'll be good. I've chosen them because of the colours. There are some round things which really look too divine. And just look at this nougat," he cried ecstatically, "just look at it! It's a perfect little ballet."

But at that moment the shopman appeared. "Oh, I forgot. They're none of them paid for," said Bobby, looking frightened. Isabel gave the shopman a note, and Bobby was radiant again. "Hallo, William! I'm sitting by the driver." And bareheaded, all in white, with his sleeves rolled up to the shoulders, he leapt into his place. "Avanti!" he cried. . . .

After tea the others went off to bathe, while William stayed and made his peace with the kiddies. But Johnny and Paddy were asleep, the rose-red glow had paled, bats were flying, and still the bathers had not returned. As William wandered downstairs, the maid crossed the hall carrying a lamp. He followed her into the sitting-room. It was a long room, coloured yellow. On the wall opposite William some one had painted a young man, over life-size, with very wobbly legs, offering a wide-eyed daisy to a young woman who had one very short arm and one very long, thin one. Over the chairs and sofa there hung strips of black material, covered with big splashes like broken eggs, and everywhere one looked there seemed to be an ash-tray full of cigarette ends. William sat down in one of the arm-chairs. Nowadays, when one felt with one hand down the sides, it wasn't to come upon a sheep with three legs or a cow that had lost one horn, or a very fat dove out of the Noah's Ark. One fished up yet another little paper-covered book of smudged-looking poems. . . . He thought of the wad of papers in his pocket, but he was too hungry and tired to read. The door was open; sounds came from the kitchen. The servants were talking as if they were alone in the house. Suddenly there came a loud screech of laughter and an equally loud "Sh!" They had remembered him. William got up and went through the French windows into the garden, and as he stood there in the shadow he heard the bathers coming up the sandy road; their voices rang through the quiet.

"I think it's up to Moira to use her little arts and wiles."

A tragic moan from Moira.

"We ought to have a gramophone for the week-ends that played 'The Maid of the Mountains.'"

"Oh no! Oh no!" cried Isabel's voice. "That's not fair to William. Be nice to him, my children! He's only staying until to-morrow evening."

"Leave him to me," cried Bobby Kane. "I'm awfully good at looking after people."

The gate swung open and shut. William moved on the terrace; they had seen him. "Hallo, William!" And Bobby Kane, flapping his towel, began to leap and pirouette on the parched lawn. "Pity you didn't come, William. The water was divine. And we all went to a little pub afterwards and had sloe gin."

The others had reached the house. "I say, Isabel," called Bobby, "would you like me to wear my Nijinsky dress to-night?"

"No," said Isabel, "nobody's going to dress. We're all starving. William's starving, too. Come along, *mes amis,* let's begin with sardines."

"I've found the sardines," said Moira, and she ran into the hall, holding a box high in the air.

"A Lady with a Box of Sardines," said Dennis gravely.

"Well, William, and how's London?" asked Bill Hunt, drawing the cork out of a bottle of whisky.

"Oh, London's not much changed," answered William.

"Good old London," said Bobby, very hearty, spearing a sardine.

But a moment later William was forgotten. Moira Morrison began wondering what colour one's legs really were under water.

"Mine are the palest, palest mushroom colour."

Bill and Dennis ate enormously. And Isabel filled glasses, and changed plates, and found matches, smiling blissfully. At one moment she said, "I do wish, Bill, you'd paint it."

"Paint what?" said Bill loudly, stuffing his mouth with bread.

"Us," said Isabel, "round the table. It would be so fascinating in twenty years' time."

Bill screwed up his eyes and chewed. "Light's wrong," he said rudely, "far too much yellow"; and went on eating. And that seemed to charm Isabel, too.

But after supper they were all so tired they could do nothing but yawn until it was late enough to go to bed. . . .

It was not until William was waiting for his taxi the next afternoon that he found himself alone with Isabel. When he brought his suit-case down into the hall, Isabel left the others and went over to him. She stooped down and picked up the suit-case. "What a weight!" she said, and she gave a little awkward laugh. "Let me carry it! To the gate."

"No, why should you?" said William. "Of course, not. Give it to me."

"Oh, please do let me," said Isabel. "I want to, really." They walked together silently. William felt there was nothing to say now.

"There," said Isabel triumphantly, setting the suit-case down, and she looked anxiously along the sandy road. "I hardly seem to have seen you this time," she said breathlessly. "It's so short, isn't it? I feel you've only just come. Next time—" The taxi came into sight. "I hope they look after you properly in London. I'm so sorry the babies have been out all day, but Miss Neil had arranged it. They'll hate missing you. Poor William, going back to London." The taxi turned. "Good-bye!" She gave him a little hurried kiss; she was gone.

Fields, trees, hedges streamed by. They shook through the empty, blind-looking little town, ground up the steep pull to the station.

The train was in. William made straight for a first-class smoker, flung back into the corner, but this time he let the papers alone. He folded his arms against the dull, persistent gnawing, and began in his mind to write a letter to Isabel.

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The post was late as usual. They sat outside the house in long chairs under coloured parasols. Only Bobby Kane lay on the turf at Isabel's feet. It was dull, stifling; the day drooped like a flag.

"Do you think there will be Mondays in Heaven?" asked Bobby childishly.

And Dennis murmured, "Heaven will be one long Monday."

But Isabel couldn't help wondering what had happened to the salmon they had for supper last night. She had meant to have fish mayonnaise for lunch and now . . .

Moira was asleep. Sleeping was her latest discovery. "It's *so* wonderful. One simply shuts one's eyes, that's all. It's *so* delicious."

When the old ruddy postman came beating along the sandy road on his tricycle one felt the handlebars ought to have been oars.

Bill Hunt put down his book. "Letters," he said complacently, and they all waited. But, heartless postman—O malignant world! There was only one, a fat one for Isabel. Not even a paper.

"And mine's only from William," said Isabel mournfully.

"From William—already?"

"He's sending you back your marriage lines as a gentle reminder."

"Does everybody have marriage lines? I thought they were only for servants."

"Pages and pages! Look at her! A Lady reading a Letter," said Dennis.

My darling, precious Isabel. Pages and pages there were. As Isabel read on her feeling of astonishment changed to a stifled feeling. What on earth had induced William . . . ? How extraordinary it was. . . . What could have made him . . . ? She felt confused, more and more excited, even frightened. It was just like William. Was it? It was absurd, of course, it must be absurd, ridiculous. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh dear!" What was she to do? Isabel flung back in her chair and laughed till she couldn't stop laughing.

"Do, do tell us," said the others. "You must tell us."

"I'm longing to," gurgled Isabel. She sat up, gathered the letter, and waved it at them. "Gather round," she said. "Listen, it's too marvellous. A love-letter!"

"A love-letter! But how divine!" *Darling, precious Isabel.* But she had hardly begun before their laughter interrupted her.

"Go on, Isabel, it's perfect."

"It's the most marvellous find."

"Oh, do go on, Isabel!"

God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness.

"Oh! oh! oh!"

"Sh! sh! sh!"

And Isabel went on. When she reached the end they were hysterical: Bobby rolled on the turf and almost sobbed.

"You must let me have it just as it is, entire, for my new book," said Dennis firmly. "I shall give it a whole chapter."

"Oh, Isabel," moaned Moira, "that wonderful bit about holding you in his arms!"

"I always thought those letters in divorce cases were made up. But they pale before this."

"Let me hold it. Let me read it, mine own self," said Bobby Kane.

But, to their surprise, Isabel crushed the letter in her hand. She was laughing no longer. She glanced quickly at them all; she looked exhausted. "No, not just now. Not just now," she stammered.

And before they could recover she had run into the house, through the hall, up the stairs into her bedroom. Down she sat on the side of the bed. "How vile, odious, abominable, vulgar," muttered Isabel. She pressed her eyes with her knuckles and rocked to and fro. And again she saw them, but not four, more like forty, laughing, sneering, jeering, stretching out their hands while she read them William's letter. Oh, what a loathsome thing to have done. How could she have done it! *God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness.* William! Isabel pressed her face into the pillow. But she felt that even the grave bedroom knew her for what she was, shallow, tinkling, vain. . . .

Presently from the garden below there came voices.

"Isabel, we're all going for a bathe. Do come!"

"Come, thou wife of William!"

"Call her once before you go, call once yet!"

Isabel sat up. Now was the moment, now she must decide. Would she go with them, or stay here and write to William. Which, which should it be? "I must make up my mind." Oh, but how could there be any question? Of course she would stay here and write.

"Titania!" piped Moira.

"Isa-bel?"

No, it was too difficult. "I'll—I'll go with them, and write to William later. Some other time. Later. Not now. But I shall *certainly* write," thought Isabel hurriedly.

And, laughing in the new way, she ran down the stairs.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

The Legacy

THE most highly esteemed English woman novelist of her time, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) came of a British family distinguished in letters. It was not until she conceived of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1927) that she formulated her characteristic view of experience and the style to re-create that experience. Her early novels, however, particularly *Night and Day,* are helpful in discovering the psychological materials used in building her insubstantial edifices. Refined to excess, subjective, ruminating, skilled in the niceties of diction, Mrs. Woolf came to regard the private world of each person as the unique knowable, and that private world as never too sure: it is fluid, it turns about swift transmutations of memory, which is itself dominated by want of time. Hence her pictures of women are unrivaled for their exploration of submerged, defeated passions in the reticent lives which so many of them must lead. The recent short story here reprinted reveals a basic change in Mrs. Woolf's outlook. It is unretouched and direct. Its picture of a dead woman's sentiments has universal meaning. It is a provocative commentary on her former assumptions for which she is cherished by most esthetes.

"FOR Sissy Miller." Gilbert Clandon, taking up the pearl brooch that lay among a litter of rings and brooches on a little table in his wife's drawing-room, read the inscription: "For Sissy Miller, with my love."

It was like Angela to have remembered even Sissy Miller, her secretary. Yet how strange it was, Gilbert Clandon thought once more, that she had left everything in such order—a little gift of some sort for every one of her friends. It was as if she had foreseen her death. Yet she had been in perfect health when she left the house that morning, six weeks ago; when she stepped off the kerb in Piccadilly and the car had killed her.

He was waiting for Sissy Miller. He had asked her to come; he owed her, he felt, after all the years she had been with them, this token of consideration. Yes, he went on, as he sat there waiting, it was strange that Angela had left everything in such order. Every friend had been left some little token of her affection. Every ring, every necklace, every little Chinese box—she had a passion for little boxes—had a name on it. And each had some memory for him. This he had given her; this—the enamel dolphin with the ruby eyes—she had pounced upon one day in a back street in Venice. He could remember her little cry of delight. To him, of course, she had left nothing in particular, unless it were her diary. Fifteen little volumes, bound in green leather, stood behind him on her writing table. Ever since they were married, she had kept a diary. Some of their very few—he could not call them quarrels, say tiffs—had been about that diary. When he came in and found her writing, she always shut it or put her hand over it. "No, no, no," he could hear her say. "After I'm dead—perhaps." So she had left it him, as her legacy. It was the only thing they had not shared when she was alive. But he had always taken it for granted that she would outlive him. If only she had stopped one moment, and had thought what she was doing, she would be alive now. But she had stepped straight off the kerb, the driver of the car had said at the inquest. She had given him no chance to pull up. . . . Here the sound of voices in the hall interrupted him.

"Miss Miller, Sir," said the maid.

She came in. He had never seen her alone in his life, nor, of course, in tears. She was terribly distressed, and no wonder. Angela had been much more to her than an employer. She had been a friend. To himself, he thought, as he pushed a chair for her and asked her to sit down, she was scarcely distinguishable from any other woman of her kind. There were thousands of Sissy Millers—drab little women in black carrying attaché cases. But Angela, with her genius for sympathy, had discovered all sorts of qualities in Sissy Miller. She was the soul of discretion; so silent; so trustworthy, one could tell her anything, and so on.

Miss Miller could not speak at first. She sat there dabbing her eyes with her pocket handkerchief. Then she made an effort.

"Pardon me, Mr. Clandon," she said.

He murmured. Of course he understood. It was only natural. He could guess what his wife had meant to her.

"I've been so happy here," she said, looking round. Her eyes rested on the writing table behind him. It was here they had worked—she and Angela. For Angela had her share of the duties that fall to the lot of a prominent politician's wife. She had been the greatest help to him in his career. He had often seen her and Sissy sitting at that table —Sissy at the typewriter, taking down letters from her dictation. No doubt Miss Miller was thinking of that, too. Now all he had to do was to give her the brooch his wife had left her. A rather incongruous gift it seemed. It might have been better to have left her a sum of money, or even the typewriter. But there it was—"For Sissy Miller, with my love." And, taking the brooch, he gave it her with the little speech that he had prepared. He knew, he said, that she would value it. His wife had often worn it. . . . And she replied, as she took it almost as if she too had prepared a speech, that it would always be a treasured possession. . . . She had, he supposed, other clothes upon which a pearl brooch would not look quite so incongruous. She was wearing the little black coat and skirt that seemed the uniform of her profession. Then he remembered—she was in mourning, of course. She, too, had had her tragedy—a brother, to whom she was devoted, had died only a week or two before Angela. In some accident was it? He could not remember—only Angela telling him. Angela, with her genius for sympathy, had been terribly upset. Meanwhile Sissy Miller had risen. She was putting on her gloves. Evidently she felt that she ought not to intrude. But he could not let her go without saying something about her future. What were her plans? Was there any way in which he could help her?

She was gazing at the table, where she had sat at her typewriter, where the diary lay. And, lost in her memories of Angela, she did not at once answer his suggestion that he should help her. She seemed for a moment not to understand. So he repeated:

"What are your plans, Miss Miller?"

"My plans? Oh, that's all right, Mr. Clandon," she exclaimed. "Please don't bother yourself about me."

He took her to mean that she was in no need of financial assistance. It would be better, he realized, to make any suggestion of that kind in a letter. All he could do now was to say as he pressed her hand, "Remember, Miss Miller, if there's any way in which I can help you, it will be a pleasure. . . ." Then he opened the door. For a moment, on the threshold, as if a sudden thought had struck her, she stopped.

"Mr. Clandon," she said, looking straight at him for the first time, and for the first time he was struck by the expression, sympathetic yet searching, in her eyes. "If at any time," she continued, "there's anything I can do to help you, remember, I shall feel it, for your wife's sake, a pleasure. . . ."

With that she was gone. Her words and the look that went with them were unexpected. It was almost as if she believed, or hoped, that he would need her. A curious, perhaps a fantastic idea occurred to him as he returned to his chair. Could it be, that during all those years when he had scarcely noticed her, she, as the novelists say, had entertained a passion for him? He caught his own reflection in the glass as he passed. He was over fifty; but he could not help admitting that he was still, as the looking-glass showed him, a very distinguished-looking man. "Poor Sissy Miller!" he said, half laughing. How he would have liked to share that joke with his wife! He turned instinctively to her diary, "Gilbert," he read, opening it at random, "looked so wonderful. . . ." It was as if she had answered his question. Of course, she seemed to say, you're very attractive to women. Of course Sissy Miller felt that too. He read on. "How proud I am to be his wife!" And he had always been very proud to be her husband. How often, when they dined out somewhere, he had looked at her across the table and said to himself, "She is the loveliest woman here!" He read on. That first year he had been standing for Parliament. They had toured his constituency. "When Gilbert sat down the applause was terrific. The whole audience rose and sang: 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' I was quite overcome." He remembered that, too. She had been sitting on the platform beside him. He could still see the glance she cast at him, and how she had tears in her eyes. And then? He turned the pages. They had gone to Venice. He recalled that happy holiday after the election. "We had ices at Florians." He smiled—she was still such a child; she loved ices. "Gilbert gave me a most interesting account of the history of Venice. He told me that the Doges . . ." she had written it all out in her schoolgirl hand. One of the delights of travelling with Angela had been that she was so eager to learn. She was so terribly ignorant, she used to say, as if that were not one of her charms. And then—he opened the next volume—they had come back to London. "I was so anxious to make a good impression. I wore my wedding dress." He could see her now sitting next old Sir Edward; and making a conquest of that formidable old man, his chief. He read on rapidly, filling in scene after scene from her scrappy fragments. "Dined at the House of Commons. . . . To an evening party at the Lovegroves'. Did I realize my responsibility, Lady L. asked me, as Gilbert's wife?" Then, as the years passed —he took another volume from the writing table—he had become more and more absorbed in his work. And she, of course, was more often home. . . . It had been a great grief to her, apparently, that they had had no children. "How I wish," one entry read, "that Gilbert had a son!" Oddly enough he had never much regretted that himself. Life had been so full, so rich as it was. That year he had been given a minor post in the government. A minor post only, but her comment was: "I am quite certain now that he will be Prime Minister!" Well, if things had gone differently, it might have been so. He paused here to speculate upon what might have been. Politics was a gamble, he reflected; but the game wasn't over yet. Not at fifty. He cast his eyes rapidly over more pages, full of the little trifles, the insignificant, happy, daily trifles that had made up her life.

He took up another volume and opened it at random. "What a coward I am! I let the chance slip again. But it seemed selfish to bother him with my own affairs, when he had so much to think about. And we so seldom have an evening alone." What was the meaning of that? Oh, here was the explanation—it referred to her work in the East End. "I plucked up courage and talked to Gilbert at last. He was so kind, so good. He made no objection." He remembered that conversation. She had told him that she felt so idle, so useless. She wished to have some work of her own. She wanted to do something—she had blushed so prettily, he remembered, as she said it, sitting in that very chair—to help others. He had bantered her a little. Hadn't she enough to do looking after him, after her home? Still, if it amused her, of course he had no objection. What was it? Some district? Some committee? Only she must promise not to make herself ill. So it seemed that every Wednesday she went to Whitechapel. He remembered how he hated the clothes she wore on those occasions. But she had taken it very seriously, it seemed. The diary was full of references like this: "Saw Mrs. Jones. . . . She has ten children. . . . Husband lost his arm in an accident. . . . Did my best to find a job for Lily." He skipped on. His own name occurred less frequently. His interest slackened. Some of the entries conveyed nothing to him. For example: "Had a heated argument about socialism with B. M." Who was B. M.? He could not fill in the initials; some woman, he supposed, that she had met on one of her committees. "B. M. made a violent attack upon the upper classes. . . . I walked back after the meeting with B. M. and tried to convince him. But he is so narrow-minded." So B. M. was a man—no doubt one of those "intellectuals," as they call themselves, who are so violent, as Angela said, and so narrow-minded. She had invited him to come and see her apparently. "B. M. came to dinner. He shook hands with Minnie!" That note of exclamation gave another twist to his mental picture. B. M., it seemed, wasn't used to parlourmaids; he had shaken hands with Minnie. Presumably he was one of those tame working men who air their views in ladies' drawing-rooms. Gilbert knew the type, and had no liking for this particular specimen, whoever B. M. might be. Here he was again. "Went with B. M. to the Tower of London. . . . He said revolution is bound to come. . . . He said we live in a Fool's Paradise." That was just the kind of thing B. M. would say —Gilbert could hear him. He could also see him quite distinctly—a stubby little man, with a rough beard, red tie, dressed as they always did in tweeds, who had never done an honest day's work in his life. Surely Angela had the sense to see through him? He read on. "B. M. said some very disagreeable things about ——." The name was carefully scratched out. "I told him I would not listen to any more abuse of ——" Again the name was obliterated. Could it have been his own name? Was that why Angela covered the page so quickly when he came in? The thought added to his growing dislike of B. M. He had had the impertinence to discuss him in this very room. Why had Angela never told him? It was very unlike her to conceal anything; she had been the soul of candour. He turned the pages, picking out every reference to B. M. "B. M. told me the story of his childhood. His mother went out charring. . . . When I think of it, I can hardly bear to go on living in such luxury. . . . Three guineas for one hat!" If only she had discussed the matter with him, instead of puzzling her poor little head about questions that were much too difficult for her to understand! He had lent her books. *Karl Marx, The Coming Revolution*. The initials B. M., B. M., B. M., recurred repeatedly. But why never the full name? There was an informality, an intimacy in the use of initials that was very unlike Angela. Had she called him B. M. to his face? He read on. "B. M. came unexpectedly after dinner. Luckily, I was alone." That was only a year ago. "Luckily"—why luckily?—"I was alone." Where had he been that night? He checked the date in his engagement book. It had been the night of the Mansion House dinner. And B. M. and Angela had spent the evening alone! He tried to recall that evening. Was she waiting up for him when he came back? Had the room looked just as usual? Were there glasses on the table? Were the chairs drawn close together? He could remember nothing—nothing whatever, nothing except his own speech at the Mansion House dinner. It became more and more inexplicable to him—the whole situation: his wife receiving an unknown man alone. Perhaps the next volume would explain. Hastily he reached for the last of the diaries—the one she had left unfinished when she died. There, on the very first page, was that cursed fellow again. "Dined alone with B. M. . . . He became very agitated. He said it was time we understood each other. . . . I tried to make him listen. But he would not. He threatened that if I did not . . ." the rest of the page was scored over. She had written "Egypt. Egypt. Egypt," over the whole page. He could not make out a single word; but there could be only one interpretation: the scoundrel had asked her to become his mistress. Alone in his room! The blood rushed to Gilbert Clandon's face. He turned the pages rapidly. What had been her answer? Initials had ceased. It was simply "he" now. "He came again. I told him I could not come to any decision. . . . I implored him to leave me." He had forced himself upon her in this very house. But why hadn't she told him? How could she have hesitated for an instant? Then: "I wrote him a letter." Then pages were left blank. Then there was this: "No answer to my letter." Then more blank pages; and then this: "He has done what he threatened." After that—what came after that? He turned page after page. All were blank. But there, on the very day before her death, was this entry: "Have I the courage to do it too?" That was the end.

Gilbert Clandon let the book slide to the floor. He could see her in front of him. She was standing on the kerb in Piccadilly. Her eyes stared; her fists were clenched. Here came the car. . . .

He could not bear it. He must know the truth. He strode to the telephone.

"Miss Miller!" There was silence. Then he heard someone moving in the room.

"Sissy Miller speaking"—her voice at last answered him.

"Who," he thundered, "is B. M.?"

He could hear the cheap clock ticking on her mantelpiece; then a long drawn sigh. Then at last she said:

"He was my brother."

He *was* her brother; her brother who had killed himself. "Is there," he heard Sissy Miller asking, "anything that I can explain?"

"Nothing!" he cried. "Nothing!"

He had received his legacy. She had told him the truth. She had stepped off the kerb to rejoin her lover. She had stepped off the kerb to escape from him.

LEONHARD FRANK

Carl and Anna

LEONHARD FRANK was born in 1882, the son of a carpenter, and was reared in the medieval city of Wurzburg. His reputation as a novelist was made by *The Robber Band,* which depicts a group of untamed boys playing at Wild West, and then, twenty years later, changed into pompous, hypocritical citizens of a small German city. Frank's work is simple and nearly all of it is rooted in the lives of workers. As the German critic Polgar has observed, Frank gives us "the inner voices which dominate in chaos. His characters produce fate as the tree leaves." *Carl and Anna* (1926) recounts the story of two soldiers fighting in Russia in World War I. One of these, Richard, tells his comrade Carl so much about his wonderful wife Anna, who is a worker in Berlin, that the lonely Carl gets to know her as though she were his own. Carl escapes to Berlin and calls on Anna. He impersonates Richard and she, partly puzzled, is so anxious that she consents to the deception. They are made for each other, and when Richard returns he is rejected. No novel has more convincingly shown the hunger for life of a poor working-woman and the need for lyrical love of a rough, honest laborer.

CARL had so exact a knowledge of Anna's appearance that if he had caught a fleeting and distant glimpse of her in a crowded street, he would have recognised her at once.

Oppressed with heavy anxiety, he ran his large, firm, workman's fingers between his collar and neck. Suddenly he saw himself going downstairs again.

Then he had already knocked and opened the door.

". . . Anna!"

She came from the window to the middle of the room, and took a plate from the table.

And he realised that even the most fervent image of the imagination is exceeded by the breathing, plastic reality of a human being, whose changing features are connected through the blood with the life, and are themselves the life; whose shape stands out from its background, whose movements cut into surrounding space.

A shiver ran across Carl's skin. His joy broke out from his eyes. "Anna! Anna! D'you know me?" It was not a lie.

At sight of his joy, her fear left her. . . . With a sense of relief she asked frankly and with curiosity: "Who are you?"

Anna was wearing a washed-out blue frock of coarse linen, which the sun had bleached to a lighter shade over her hips and high breasts. Her simple, firmly moulded face might have served Nature as a model for women with force, warmth, and unspoiled minds.

As at the barber's, he placed his bundle on the worn chair and his hat on the bundle. "I must clean off these chairs and stain them again. I told you when we got them that the stain wouldn't last."

Anna immediately remembered that her husband had made that remark. Bewilderment overcame her.

"You haven't recognised me, then?"

"Who are you?"

His face turned white, even his lips: "Richard."

She stepped back, leaning with one hand on the table. "My husband? . . . You are not my husband."

"Anna!" Suddenly his knees were weak with emotion. He took two steps, and sat down. "Anna!"

His tone touched her.

As a woman goes on performing her small daily tasks even at a time when Fate has dealt her its heaviest blow, so Anna went to the gas-cooker, put away the salt-box, collected the three spent matches, and stood for some seconds motionless, with head bent.

Her attitude was precisely that in which Carl had seen her, shortly before, with his mind's eye.

She turned round, as though she had been out to another room, and had just come back again into the kitchen. Flecks of red had appeared on her milky temples.

Her nature was too direct and candid entirely to refuse belief, even against her better knowledge, to one who spoke in such a tone as his. She looked at him like a woman grievously pressed who cannot defend herself.

"Well?" he said. "Well, Anna, don't you believe me? . . . There's no one in the world for me but you." The warm stream of life flowed in his smile, and all the adversity and all the happiness of life was there, and for him the lie turned to truth, as he said: "You're my wife."

Anna knew that he was not speaking the truth, and at the same time she felt in his words the sincerity of his feeling. She stood with hands crossed beneath her breast, bewildered by the fact that this strange man, sitting crouched forward on his chair, was not entirely alien to her own feeling.

She went to the dresser. "Good heavens! Why do you say that?"

She rummaged in a drawer, and handed Carl a faded postcard: "Four years ago! Four years!" She crossed her hands again beneath her breast.

Carl read the card, which came from the military authorities. It stated that Richard had been killed in action on the 4th of September 1914. He turned the card over, turned it back again, read it a second time, and smiled: "It's all wrong, Anna; it's wrong."

He put out his hand for hers. "What nonsense they write. . . . Take my word for it."

He was so moved and pervaded by happiness that for a second she did not withdraw her hand. There was fear in her face, and the insane hope of a woman who can believe, soon after her husband's death, that the door will open and the loved one come in as of old.

She tried to avoid the issue. "Perhaps you're hungry?" Next second she thought: I'll send him away. I'll shout to the neighbours for help. Meanwhile she cut the bread, laid a knife and fork on the table, and a piece of sausage on his plate. Should she peel the apple for him?

"Surely you haven't forgotten . . ."

With the speed of thought the blood mounted to her forehead. She peeled the apple, quartered it, cut out the core, skilfully, mechanically.

It was the first time in his life that he had been waited on by a woman he loved.

Happening to look up, she saw how moved he was, and a smile, transient and scarcely perceptible, came to break the deep gravity of her face. She pushed the plate a little nearer to him.

"What's become of the old fork with the three prongs and one shorter than the others?"

She went to the drawer as if in a dream, and brought him the fork.

"That's the one," he said, satisfied, and looked up at Anna, who sat down, still caught in her dream.

They sat beneath the lamp, shut off from the outside world by four walls. The gas-mantle hummed. To his right was the bed; to his left, the dresser; and in front, sticking out into the room, the old sofa. The window was small and square. There was a smell of preserved fruit and a cool odour of flour. The six jars of fruit stood like an ornament on a shelf on the wall.

When two people are constantly together for years, each catches little mannerisms from the other—movements, words. In eating, this man cut his bread into long strips, like Richard. Anna watched him with dismay.

Carl had invaded her loneliness, which had lasted for years, and awakened by his demands, his emotions, his atmosphere, her longing for more life. He released feelings that were in sharp antagonism to her reason. At moments when she stopped thinking, she believed.

"I'll go and look for a job on Monday, shall I?"

Then I needn't go on working in the factory, she thought. Then everything can be as it was before, even better perhaps. ". . . Why do you say you're my husband? Why do you say that?"

"But, Anna, Anna!"

"I used to be so fond of him. He was good to me, always good to me! I could never forget that. I could never forget him."

A wave of jealousy robbed him of his assurance. And for the first time he began to lie consciously, afraid lest he should lose the woman whom he had believed already won.

He pushed back the plate and looked round.

"The window-curtains are new. The ones we bought together were yellow. The salesman said, 'They're a bargain.' D'you remember?"

"I remember. God in heaven!"

"How about the instalments on the furniture, Anna?"

"I've had time to pay them off in these four years."

He smoothed his eyebrow, as another man might have smoothed his moustache. It was a habit he had caught from Richard. Anna watched him with a sense of shock.

"Then we can make a new start without too much trouble and responsibility. . . . Things will go well now, Anna. . . . Look at me. . . . Look at me, Anna, please."

Her head dropped on to her folded arms.

"You must get used to it again." Under his hand constantly and tenderly stroking her hair, her quivering body gradually grew still.

She got up. Her features had become soft, and at the same time more composed. She cleared the table.

Carl stood quietly in the corner of the room, with bowed head.

A false word, a false note would have severed them at that moment like the stroke of a knife.

From her whole bearing—the way she tidied the slight disorder of the table, glanced at him now and then unsought, closed the window and drew the curtains—he saw that she had resolved to define her position to this new event, to see what was to come of it.

She answered his questions promptly, told him she worked in a cardboard-box factory, and how much she earned. As she spoke she was picking the faded flowers from the two geranium plants.

Then there was nothing more to do. She was ready to go to bed. She leaned with her back against the window-sill.

A tension arose between them, like that between two lovers, who are not yet closely intimate and find themselves alone together in a room.

"I've got exactly thirty-five pfennigs," he said, with a sudden outbreak of gaiety.

She pointed with her finger to the sofa. "You can sleep there." And her hand went back immediately to the window-sill.

When he took his eyes from the sofa and glanced at her again, she was already at the linen-chest. She chose the best sheets and put a cover on a pillow from her own bed. "We'd better push it against the wall," she said.

Together they pushed the sofa against the wall.

Anna bent down to spread the bedclothes—precisely as he had seen her do it when he was lying thousands of miles away on the steppe.

"I'll put out the light," she said. It was already dark.

While undressing, he stopped once and sat quite still, listening for the slight sounds she made. And immediately she stopped moving also, with one leg across the other, and both hands on the stocking she had half pulled down.

He lay on his back, with his hands beneath his head and his eyes open, listening. For a time he could hear nothing. "Are you in bed?" he asked.

He repeated his question. And knew from the tone of her "Yes" that she too was lying wide awake with open eyes.

The veiled roar of the city, with its pervading theme of hoots from near and distant cars, surrounded the profound stillness of the room.

Dreading the intimacy of sound, Anna did not move in bed. Not till she heard his regular breathing did she guardedly change the uncomfortable posture in which she was lying. . . .

The hundred thousand daily movements which her mobile hands had been performing for years in the cardboard-box factory, had made them slender and nervous, like those of finely organised women, who are the product of breeding and inbreeding.

On her feet, which were rather small for her build, she was wearing her best shoes. She had on a thin summer frock, and the curves of her body showed through the tight material, retaining the natural innocence of nakedness. As she opened the door, carrying a large, full milk-coloured earthenware jug in her hand, Carl was bending over the gas-cooker.

I wanted to fix this up before the war, he thought. The effect of Anna's presence was so strong that he did not say the words aloud, although at that moment, feeling as he did, they would not have been a lie.

Anna looked adorned, as though she were wearing flowers.

He stared at the woman standing fresh as milk in the doorway, and involuntarily drew together the edges of his open shirt across his bronzed, muscular, black-haired chest. He had no coat on. Only trousers and belt. His white shirt was crumpled. Some days before, he had washed both himself and the shirt in a river, and allowed both to dry in the sun.

Although Carl was shaved and washed, the wild scent of stream and forest and the long, long journey clung round him. Thus he had reached civilisation, where there was a bed, four walls, and Anna.

She said, "Good morning!" And her voice exactly matched her appearance, her gait, her body, her mouth.

The movement with which she set down the milk-jug, bending down because she held the paper bag full of rolls under the same arm, revealed her whole body.

She laid the table scrupulously, as though for an intimate feast, examined the effect, and finally folded two paper napkins with particular care. All the time a man stood by the window, looking on.

The constraint of the evening before had vanished. Anna was quite changed, as though she had unexpectedly gained, during her night's sleep, the conviction that she was ready for life.

Carl's eyes followed her everywhere; and when she tried to pass by him to fetch a jar of fruit, he found no words and no time for his wooing.

Anna's body trembled in his embrace, as a forest tree trembles before the storm breaks.

With her arm still round his neck, she let herself slide on to the chair. "Eat first!"

He heard the promise in her words.

She prepared his bread and offered it to him with a glance. She could not eat. She looked on, with her hands in her lap.

"What slim little hands you have! Like a fine lady!"

She stood up, embarrassed, and walked to the window.

Slowly he went to her, drawn by the assent and agitation of her smile, and put his arm slowly round her. They stood motionless, holding each other.

And even when he raised his eyes, and found her lips trembling and open, and took them again and again, no word was spoken.

The thin material too firmly enclosed her breast and shoulders. He undid the buttons.

Weakly smiling, she herself loosened the shoulder-strap, and fell towards him as the garment dropped. The sun lay full on the white linen of the bed.

Carl hitched up his belt vigorously, and stepped backwards, deeply conscious of the blessing of doors, doors with a lock, and a key that could be turned.

Then he was standing before her again, where she lay in the sun, and he was convinced that there was no joy in the world equal to that of being sure of his loved one and of her surrender.

He stood there in his blissful certainty till she, submerged beneath his glance, shot up like a trout and drew him to herself.

NOTE ON PRINCESS MARTHE BIBESCO'S "CATHERINE-PARIS"

Born in Bucharest, of parents steeped in the tradition of France. Catherine was made an orphan while very young. And although not well off financially, she was nevertheless eligible for marriage to the first families of Europe. She finally weds Adam Leopolski, first noble of Galicia, after a long wrangling over precedence and the scandalous suicide of his mistress.

The dull life on an estate as large as a kingdom, the absence of intelligence and taste, together with the humiliation of Catherine by her husband's promiscuity and caprice, lead to disaster. They separate. Adam seeks consolation with a dancer, Miquette; Catherine remains in her Paris household.

At first, her only guests are her former tutors, but she soon is the center of a brilliant salon. Subsequently she makes the acquaintance of a French aviator, Ricard. Her position is anomalous when France goes to war against Austria; for since she is the wife of a Polish nobleman of Austrian nationality, she is ipso facto *an enemy of her beloved France. Nevertheless, she pursues her Ricard, who is a prisoner of war in Germany.*

PRINCESS MARTHE BIBESCO

Catherine-Paris

Princess Marthe Bibesco, of one of the noblest European families, was born (1887) in Romania but educated in Paris—the city which is almost her religion. No other novelist has had her opportunity to study the aristocracy, and few could have paralleled her achievement. She has no illusions either as to its makeup or its historic destiny. *Catherine-Paris* (1928) is a heart-rending picture of the degradation of sensitive womanhood by that dull, encrusted society, and it describes the escape of a princess through her love for a French aviator. Princess Bibesco is a gardener, poet, society chronicler, mystical Catholic, and *mondaine* democrat. In her many volumes, which defy easy classification, her style is astonishing for the classic simplicity with which she conveys the feeling of ornament and even of excess. She is one of the few writers equally capable of rendering chit-chat, reflecting the patine of a complex society, evoking the scent and shape of flowers, and weaving the tapestry of folkways. The leading titled writer of the world, she is as feminine and decorative in letters as is Marie Laurencin in painting.

ADAM never did what was expected of him; he did other things in other fashions. To such a degree was this true, that in childhood he poured his cocoa on the tablecloth and spilt his glass of water on the floor. His governesses, who were never allowed to punish him, learnt to control him by rousing his instinct for contradiction. Everything went by opposites. To make him eat, it was necessary not only to take away his plate, but to give it to some one else; he felt hunger only if it was mixed with jealousy. When his sisters were seized with a longing to touch his face, as if beauty were contagious, they had first to tell him that kissing was forbidden. Before he would learn to read, his books had to be hidden away. He was sad on holidays and joyful when he was punished; he was unpunishable. His fearful childhood had never been outgrown; it had only taken another form; at thirty-seven he was the same, and his governesses, who were now called his mistresses, continued to use the same methods.

As they drove toward the Gare de l'Est on the night of their wedding, Adam was melancholy. A month of promises certain to be fulfilled, on a given day, by an act long foreseen, to which the distasteful notion of an accomplished duty would henceforth be attached, had sufficed to destroy his passion. How splendid this passion had been, in the days when he was bound to another! It was this other, the lovely and cruel Guyon, who had robbed him of his love by drowning it; for she had drowned it indeed, like a heartbroken mother who leaps into the river with her child. To each of his mistresses, Adam had owed his love for her successor; it was the fruit of their union, and the woman's duty was to make it grow and prosper. Why had this one mistress been false to her task? She was no longer present to encourage him with her tears and to furnish the necessary obstacle without which he could enjoy nothing. They had thought he was "gone" on Catherine. But, alas! how could he go when there was nothing to hold him back?

In order to warm this dead heart, and to encourage this strange bridegroom to whom nothing possible was permitted, it would have been necessary for Catherine to have some foreknowledge of an art which she would acquire only with age. How was she to have known that Adam could be enthralled by dissonance, surprise, and the magic of disappointment? Where could she have learnt to withdraw her hand from an inert hand, to simulate a scene, to do no matter what, provided that it be violent, brief, and unexpected—like throwing herself from a window or taking another train? Instead she allowed herself to be invaded by the incomprehensible sadness of her companion, a sort of animal melancholy which in his case preceded the joy of possession, as if this man who did everything backwards had even reversed the order of nature. Their compartment in the Orient Express was heaped with flowers; it seemed a burial vault, and its two berths were a sort of double bier. Catherine, on the threshold of this mahogany tomb, lived through the memories of her first journey. As soon as she heard the hum of the rails, it reminded her of her earliest game:

> When Papa rides horseback to Paris,
> He walks, and he walks, and he walks!

She was rushing off at a gallop by the road she had come. Caught between two steel rails, without being able to switch either northwards or southwards into the depths of France, she was being hurried toward the eastern frontier. The lights of Meaux were dancing over her face. A storm met the train. Through a streaming window, Catherine saw the drowned roads fleeing into the distance; the trees as if routed were falling back on Paris. Everything had the air of a lost battle. Adam, who had been standing in the corridor since they left the Gare de l'Est, continuing a conversation with his valet, now sought Catherine's eyes, which were seeking his no longer. Perceiving that she had been looking backwards for a long moment, he entered the compartment, slipped his arm behind her, and jerked the curtain shut. By her averted face, by her infinite gaze toward the fields as they fled into the night, Catherine had just reawakened the savage desire he felt, when, for the first time, he had seen her looking away. He did not give her time to return to him. She must not return. This absentee was the woman he desired. Merciless as a footpad, he robbed her before she lost consciousness. He robbed her of her innocent desire for him; he brought the music of her senses to a stop, as one deadens the troublesome vibration of a glass. He took away her feeling of assent, and this is a loss which honor does not survive. The wound she received was anonymous. To prevent her from recognizing him by his voice, he acted in silence. His face had changed so completely that if one sought for an image of the assassin under the dead eyelids of the victim, one would have found only the unrecognizable features of a madman.

As the train rocked on, cradling her sorrow with a rough hand, she slowly grew calm. The demon that had come to her, the vanished incubus, had retired into the shadows of the upper berth. Under the night lamp, she found herself alone with flowers as in a tomb; the vibration made the lilies nod their heads. The train passed through Chalons-sur-Marne with an almost human sigh. Again it gathered speed, and its dance became almost frantic between Toul and Nancy. It gave a rhythm to her thoughts and forged them into verses:

At first it is frightful, but then
It is nothing at all. . . .

Why was she heartbroken over this word "nothing"? Had she then hoped for something? Before the train reached Avricourt, she was asleep. She passed the frontier without waking. But the memory of the attack followed her into her dreams: she was dead and mourning for herself. Seeing her grief, Uncle Charles-Adolphe and M. Beau drew near. They looked at her sadly, and with such an air of reproach that she melted into tears.

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There was one point on which they dwelt with unction, and that was the admirable conduct of Adam. For his family's sake, he had abandoned all thought of a separation from Catherine. Once having been stupid enough to marry her, he refused to comply with the Emperor's commands. If he consoled himself for his domestic sorrows with a little dancer from the Olympia, it was nothing more than justice. The young ladies had too much experience of the world to be ignorant of its uses.

Since Adam had been living with a woman who was under the orders of a stage-manager, he dined not at all, with regularity. This nobleman exempt from military service, this master who made laws for his household so as better to transgress them himself, this honorary diplomat, this man without a profession—in a word, this Pole—came to know the tyranny of the clock and the excitement of keeping engagements. Every evening at fifteen minutes to eight, he was to join Miquette and take her to the theater. He was greeted with screams and round oaths if he allowed her to fear, even for a second, that he would not come. Exactitude became the ruling passion of Adam Leopolski. Enslaved by the slave that is a woman tamed by the public, he snatched a bite between acts, at the corner of a greasy table cluttered with jars of make-up. And when Miquette cried, "Get to hell out of here!"—not to his cup of coffee, which he never had time to drink, but to himself—he thought he was tasting the strong emotions of his ancestor Louis XV.

Catherine took to dining alone, but in Paris a woman of her type could not long adhere to this melancholy habit. Having begun by asking Abbé Mésange and M. Beau to stay for dinner, she soon extended the invitation to other callers when she doubted that they were going home to dress. So as to give her invitations a still more informal air, she had the table spread in the corner room, where they dined four or five together in the glow of sunset reflected from the Seine. When Adam Leopolski, hastening toward Miquette, crossed his wife's salon, he often stumbled on this group of illustrious strangers. He listened distractedly to their names, which were Hébrard, Capus, Rodin, France, and observed that they were old and not in evening dress. He called them "the bonzes." This nickname was extended to the time they appeared, which became "the hour of the bonzes." Something of the Matignon tradition had survived in the Ile Saint-Louis, with all the splendor which the river added to the hour of lighted lamps. Soon, to avoid the strange guests his wife was cultivating, Adam ceased even to enter the corner room, and rushed out by another door. The Leaguers took pity on him, saying, "She entertains people her husband doesn't wish to see." And all their relatives decided that she was in the wrong.

Catherine's mania for surrounding herself with old men was beginning to discourage her younger admirers. She was cheating life. Her happy air was incompatible with the absence of a lover. An attempt was made to give her several bad reputations, none of which lasted. That of being a bluestocking failed to survive the test of a conversation with her. She spoke simply, and her happy choice of words made her amusing. Moreover, French society has retained very little prejudice against intellectual women since the days of Mme. de Staël and of

George Sand. There must be other reasons for her not taking a lover. Her reputation for frigidity did not harmonize with her appearance. Besides, since the Récamier affair, French clubmen have ceased to believe in physiological purity. They spoke of Lesbians. But her evident preference for masculine society frightened off the women who might otherwise have rushed in to console her. The others, who came to the Hôtel Leopolski in hopes of meeting men, soon left off their visits. They had realized that men did not see them. The effect of Catherine's presence was to make other women invisible.

Isvolski, who was attracted not only by the celebrated passion of old Lvovkovitch for Catherine, but even more by the admiration shown her by his enemy Aerenthal, was a frequent caller. "Women are never friends; they are only accomplices," he told her one day. The world, which agreed with the Russian ambassador, concluded that Catherine had still to feel the need for accomplices. Since, by nature and education, she took pleasure in men's company, and since their company unfortunately involved their homage, she was accused of enticing them. One might just as well accuse a plant of enticing the rays of the sun. She was playing the jilt in spite of herself, and none of those who aspired to win her love—none, that is, of all the men who approached her—suspected the real author of their disappointments.

Adam was successful in defending his marital honor, not because he valued it more highly than other husbands, but simply because his example had made a skeptic of his wife. He had robbed her of that power of believing in love and the resurrection of love which is the religion of women. She had seen his life, and the life of other men in his, since he had been her revelation of the world. He had been sent to warn her, like the drunken helots whom the Spartans paraded before their children. Leaving him to his bacchantes, she turned away from the spectacle. Of all that life brought her, she made two parts: one part for friendship, which she believed to be the only plausible form of love, and another part which she neglected. Everything is known sooner or later in Paris, and people soon learnt how Catherine discouraged her admirers. One day, during a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, she had told La Ferté-Massé, who was urging her to yield to his desires:

"When I walk with a man, I know that I am walking with a man and a dog. I am never concerned with the wishes of the dog."

The women were against her already. After answers of this nature to questions of this nature, the men were against her also. There remained only the children—which is to say, the childlike men who were capable of disinterested love: among them were a philologist, an Englishman, a palaeontologist, a physician. There remained also a few vain men who were satisfied with the mere appearance of a liaison, though its platonic nature was doubted only by their mistresses, who, being jealous, were more easily controlled. There remained still other pretended admirers by whom Catherine was used as a means of conquest. It happened that some women yielded to the thought that the men who were courting them had been to the Hôtel Leopolski, and that there was only one method of preventing their return. There remained also the authors, who sought the caress of her mind; the orators, who were roused by her sallies; and the men of fashion, whose elegance was wedded to hers. Thus, she was never alone, although she and her guests were never "together" in the sense which the servants' hall, that molder of reputations, attaches to these words.

She knew that she had been lonely as soon her loneliness came to an end. The birth of love is always accompanied by the idea of solitude. A single being appears, and the rest of the world grows empty. Whence did this being come? Properly speaking, from the skies. One morning in the month of June, 1912, at sunrise, a little group of enthusiasts had gathered on the river-bank, in a neighborhood known as the Point-du-Jour, to watch the trial flight of a hydroplane. They included the minister of war, the Russian ambassador, a few designers, half a dozen engineers, an equal number of journalists, and a woman. Her interest in aviation had charmed the spectators, as had also her youth. Like hosts, they did her the honors of air and water; it was as if this perilous show were being given for her. And when the luminous swan, after being absorbed into the growing light, turned, grew in size, blackened to a point in the distance, and finally came back with a noise of thunder to rend the bosom of the river, it was as if the mythological machine and its human pilot were being dedicated to Catherine. Robert Ricard climbed to the bank. She was carried toward him, like palms to a victor, with the felicitations of the crowd.

He received her with surprise, with gratitude. During the breakfast given for the pilot-inventor by the Russian government, in a little café overlooking the water, he rested his eyes on her and thought, "It is good to be here; I am in the sun." There was a woman among them, and for him this inexplicable presence was enough. He saw her; perhaps in another moment he would see her no more. His instinct commanded him to hold her while she was there, but his reason held him back. Robert Ricard was one of those logical young Frenchmen who think they have succeeded, once and for all, in regulating their hearts by their watches. Under the arbor where they crowded at one table, in the thorough informality of an early breakfast, his eyes went seeking the man to whom Catherine might belong; and, as he hoped not to find him, his hopes were justified. He decided that she had come by chance, and was delighted with an explanation which cleared his path of obstacles. However, since he foresaw that she would disappear in the same mysterious fashion, perhaps without giving him time to pass the bounds of mere politeness, he contented himself with a sort of vicarious courtship. Having removed her gloves, Catherine had laid them on the table, not beside the ambassador, but on the side toward the aviator. Robert was elated by this choice. He lavished all his caresses on the abandoned gloves, not daring to offer such affection to Catherine herself. He raised them tenderly; he showed them all his kindness, his thoughtfulness, his fervor. He treated them as if they shared the delicacy of his own emotions. And Catherine, who had thought herself beyond the reach of any man, was touched by this indirect caress.

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She was at a loss for words to describe her marriage; she was ashamed of her career as a wife. It had been nothing but a school of prostitution, in which she had tried, under the direction of an old procuress, to please a man who did not love her. She had forgotten that she herself had ever loved Adam. She said merely that her husband had forsaken her a week after their marriage. Robert at once dismissed him as a madman or a fool. But indeed, he hardly listened to her explanations. She had every charm. He knew her to be innocent and falsely condemned. Never had he attempted to learn anything about her past, which he had judged summarily from her face, and of which he hoped to become the master. What did it matter whether her passport was Russian, Austrian, or Rumanian? Since he loved her, he was sure of being able to change all that. A man knows how to take away a woman's nationality and give her another. And the law confirms his belief in his powers of transubstantiation. Robert recited the French Civil Code as if it were a magic formula: *"A foreign woman, on her marriage to a French citizen, assumes the nationality of her husband."* His love could perform this miracle. Why had Catherine waited so long? . . . Sitting on a bench that faced the old Louvre, they made all the resolutions which should have been made a year before. The chimes of Saint-German-l'Auxerrois struck the hour of their vows: four o'clock in the morning. All the steeples of Paris prepared to sound the tocsin. Princess Anna's counsels became their program for the future. The war could not possibly last till Christmas. Robert's ideas on the subject were simple, and he expressed them in pat phrases: it would be death or victory within three weeks. Catherine was to go, not with the Austrian ambassador and his suite, but alone toward Italy. In Rome she would make arrangements to have her marriage dissolved, as Anna had advised. She could then return to Paris, for, having filed suit for divorce, she would have resumed the lost nationality which was to save her. . . .

Their progress was retarded by their goal, which was separation. The day was breaking when finally, still embracing, they came in sight of the island. Catherine, leaning on Robert's shoulder, stood a long time staring at the river and the house crowned with foliage. Was it not this mansion, with all its mirroring windows, that had brought her into Adam's life? "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house!" And was it not the Seine that had tempted her, as, in this curious spot, it tempts all lovers? Paris, of which she bore the name and inhabited the heart—Paris was casting her out in the day of danger, because her heart had once chosen unwisely. Catherine turned her head, and looked at the face of Robert, from whom her salvation would come. It was the face of a man whose love might have given her the keys to the city, if she had not rebelled against life. In the calm twilight which precedes day, it wore a look of almost paternal mildness. Seized with respect, she disengaged his arm, took his hand, and led him toward Notre Dame. At five o'clock in the morning, the great portal still was closed. She wished to try the Red Door, and as she found it bolted like the other, they could only kneel at the top of the steps, on the porch framed with wild roses. There, outside the Church, both of them prayed. They separated in the first rays of the sun, in the little garden which surrounds the apse of the cathedral. . . .

NOTE ON JACQUES CHARDONNE'S

"EVA"

This is the story, told in his journal, of a man who makes a willing sacrifice of his personality, friends, intellectual life, way of earning a living, home—in fact of every one of his personal preferences for the sake of his wife, Eva. He is obsessed by his love for her and by his probing of her soul.

JACQUES CHARDONNE

Eva

JACQUES CHARDONNE, born Jacques Boutelleau, in 1884, in France, of partly American descent, is considered by many French critics to be the supreme novelist of the couple. In his masterly *Epithalamium,* he records the fluidity of personalities in courtship and marriage and their final resolution. The perpetual changes of attitude and sentiment, of drifting apart and of reconciliation (or failure) of the couple, are deftly displayed through an apparently continuous system of psychic excerpts. Chardonne's method consists in revealing the silent debate between one man and one woman in intimacy. Every situation is so contrived as to make the reader think that he is cooperating in revealing the hidden world, whereas it is the exact treatment by Chardonne that effects the recognition. In *Eva* (1931) a husband spends years divining the attitudes of his adored wife. Everything is sacrificed for her, but her basic view of him is outside his carefully recorded impressions of her. Chardonne holds that love cannot endure. It is a necessary passion through which the contrasts of a man and a woman can be given a habitation. It must be transcended in marriage and thus prove its worth.

WHEN I was young, at least fifteen years ago, I published a novel. I have just re-read it. At most only two or three phrases, that I did not even notice when I was writing, move me at all now. If the book is unearthed later it will not be I who sees the light of day again. Every expression of oneself represents only a fleeting minute.

My relatives thought I was describing my own engagement, my marriage, my very self. They were wrong. I have revealed nothing of myself in that novel. Confessions in literature are rare; it takes too much trouble to reproduce one's own feelings.

I was inspired by Eva. Her portrait was a good likeness. But I was criticised above all for drawing so unlikely a type of young girl. Also they found love missing from this love-story. In short, I had not much success.

To-day, when I write my journal, I do it careless of style or of the people who will misinterpret it.

For years now I have written nothing but business letters. My mind seems emptied of thought. All the same, I do not care to listen to the gramophone or to play bridge. I cannot watch a play. It is as though these amusements threatened to distract my thoughts. These sleeping ideas take this fitful form because I am merely jotting down notes. If I were composing a novel, or an essay, if I considered audience, reputation, art or health, they would have assumed another shape. They would have been very different.

. . . I have written nothing for fifteen years, but if life, in the smallest details, had gone otherwise, I should have been a novelist by now. I should have produced certain books which my moral well-being insisted that I should write. Great works take root from frail seeds. They reveal the writer to himself. Then success or failure modifies the man even to his very thought and his power of invention. Some men are born for the shadow. Glory seizes them. In its bright light they live withdrawn and shy. Others have need of praise if they are to become reasonable beings.

A profession turns one away from many vanities. Perhaps it turns one too far. That is what has happened to me. A family to support on very little money, a job, a wife whom I love and whom I have sought to make happy—these things have monopolised me. Certain conditions of life, probably, above all, certain relations with one's family, are the reason for many masterpieces. They are also the reason that a great many die in the seed.

In fact, though, the reason for my abstention from writing has nothing to do with my profession. I am a happy man. I have the only real happiness that can be in this world. I love the woman with whom I live and who is my wife.

I have no taste for fantasy. I love imagination only where it is capable of rehandling a moral drama that has been played once only, and that in secret and in the places of the spirit. That is the drama that has been my undoing.

One never sees any aspect of love depicted in books except thwarted love. These terrifying problems interest me. But I look on them as curiosities. On that subject I know more than any doctor of psychology. I know that there exists a love, confident, shared, and hardy. Time but increases it and renders it more beautiful. I am certain of this, for I have seen many instances of it.

It is credible that the very subtlety of its quality makes this love incapable of exaltation. It supplies little enough in the way of incident. It expresses itself briefly, in words that have lost their force. Yet the man who has known it asks nothing else of life. He has nothing more to say. When the Japanese were happy, they painted only cups and screens.

There remains only the longing to write. This I assuage with these jottings. I am not ashamed lest I put down thoughts too intimate or too slight. Only so, perhaps, shall I end by seeing myself as I am. Is it a false face that I conjure up unawares and that may cheat me? Why? Do I exist more certainly in the unfathomable deeps of my being? The man who has risen from that darkness, whom I see and whom I can reproduce, is a fairly complex being. I must hold to that.

At present it is supposed that human beings cannot communicate themselves to each other. They escape the nicest observation. In particular, the beloved is utterly strange to us. We shall never possess her. But for my part, I find I know her through and through. That is exactly love's tragedy.

There's not a shade, not a remote delicacy in Eva that I have not perceived; not a word whose exact repercussion on her I cannot gauge; not a contradiction whose effects I have not foreseen and that I yet have not known how to avoid. It almost seems that she has diffused me with her own too delicate sensibility. This to such a point that I am affected in her stead, but even more keenly, by an event that would shake her. If we have no friends in Paris except Etienne, because of certain kinks in Eva's character, that also testifies to my ardour. I have evaded so many invitations, put forward so many grotesque excuses for refusal, snubbed so many acquaintances. Behold us, now, in a desert.

I realise that it bores and wearies Eva to receive anyone; that the idea of calling on a friend torments her beforehand so much that she will not go. But afterwards, she regrets not having gone. I know the nervous weakness, the complex and finespun reasons that make all social life difficult for her. But, penetrating too deeply into her nature, and, where Eva is concerned, acting in life as though I experienced her reflexes, not my own, I have given her too much licence. Had I been less alive to her sensibilities, more indifferent to her moods, more brutal, and more of an egoist, I should not have noticed these nearly impalpable shades of feeling.

There is no way into another human being unless through love. The woman whom you love, but who does not love you, must remain uncomprehended.

. . . Yesterday evening, coming home from my office, I took the Rue du Bac. A 'bus filled the whole roadway, so that I had to jump on to the little pavement and flatten myself against a shop window. I looked at myself in the glass, and it seemed to me, then, that though I had taken this street home every day at ten minutes past six for the last five years, I had never noticed myself on the journey before. No doubt I was thinking of the very note I am writing now, and I grew conscious of my own movements. I saw myself, dexterous and swift, threading the crowd every evening, never letting myself be delayed in the thronged and brilliant streets that are so delightfully arranged to snare the passer-by.

Eva waits for me without worrying until twenty minutes past six. But every form of unpunctuality is intolerable to her. She never reproaches me. Only a light cloud on her face, that I shall not be able to clear away that evening, warns me of her irritation. Thanks to a nimbleness that has become mechanical, I arrive at the minute when I am looked for. This is how I employ the time left me after working hours—in rushing home as fast as possible and by the shortest way. As a young man I loved loafing about and chatting with friends. Nowadays I no longer even see the rudenesses, the broken engagements, the refusals that I heap one on top of another. I no longer notice the stratagems that I must practise anew every day if I am to be certain of returning promptly at the end of it. Such constraint would once have appalled me—that is, if I could have imagined it. But I do not feel my slavery. Beside the joy of finding Eva in a good temper, nothing matters to me.

I no longer know whether I have cut the world off for the sake of Eva's susceptibilities, or because I wanted to. I love conversation, I talk—even to this dumb paper. In other days it is certain this solitude would have weighed on me. But I was not the same man then. The life we lead to-day is what I like. At least, I think so.

I treasure delightful pictures in my mind of the time when I used to meet strangers. In summer, for instance, four men were in an airy dining-room at Auteuil; the blinds were lowered, and the room was filled with a soft light like champagne. The luncheon was pure Paris; seasoned with the sort of good temper appetite gives when a meal is late. No one knew me. And I found myself, with that anonymity, deliciously rid of my cares, even of my usual personality. A gracious, kindly spirit, the sort of love one feels for humanity at large—or for the person who happens to be there—moved easily amongst these undefined and unknown beings.

At certain parties in the social world, I have read that the celebrities in finance, letters, science, and politics send representatives to talk over a cup of tea. These meetings, I believe, are rather odd. I cannot think that the poet, the scholar, and the business man can penetrate the same drawing-room in their proper persons. It is some substitute devoid of character that we see enter—a courteous ghost. No one at all sits at the tea-table. And that is exactly the charm of it.

. . . I made these entries on Sunday morning. I should like to write every day, but I do not dispose of my own evenings. I buy books. I put them in tidy rows in my library. But it is Eva who has time to read. The minutes we share are short, and all the time that is over from the children I keep for Eva. She has to be asleep at half-past nine exactly. If she goes to bed a little later a queer nervousness seizes her, and she spends a sleepless night. Unless I am in the room she cannot close an eye. For a long time she has not wanted me to sleep with her. But I must be at hand. This forces me to go to bed very early. I lie awake, outstretched on my back, trying not to move. Towards midnight I begin to think that if I were to get up and walk about the room, if I were to eat some fruit, I should, perhaps, get to sleep at once. But the slightest noise—if I make it—will wake Eva, and she will not sleep again. And in the morning her temper will feel the effects of that. And that, above everything else, is what I dread. Not that she is ever impatient or unreasonable. But the least fatigue makes its mark on her spirit. The alteration is one that I alone can see. But it spoils what is dearest to me in this world. I must say, however, that when the disturbance comes from outside, or the children are noisy, she goes to sleep again at once.

I don't know what I meant to say when I began to write down these details. Perhaps it was this. Nothing, it seems, is more determined than character, and nothing is more difficult to modify than a tendency or trait in nature. But circumstances sometimes perform even this miracle for us where we least expect it. My temperament is nervous, irritable, authoritative. Yet none of this shows in my life. I exhibit an affability and a complaisance that you find in simpletons who have no nerves. I was frivolous, independent—the last man in the world to put up with a wife. Nothing is left, it seems, of that man.

There is a secret for living happily with the woman you love. You must not try to change her. A man often destroys his happiness in seeking to correct a fault that worries him. Let us look carefully whether this fault be not rooted in the beloved's nature. If it excite an irritation altogether out of proportion, it is because some lurking hatred that we have not realised chooses this pretext for explosion. The woman divines the secret cause, when she seems unreasonably distressed by remarks that were meant to soothe. And her sensitiveness increases our anger. It is but a step to those grotesque quarrels of married people, in which words no longer wear their proper meanings, but are cloaks to hide wounding blades; signs of some dumb language, unintelligible, incomprehensible symbols pointing to some obscure tragedy.

Faults that we dislike are tiresome. But let us watch them carefully. The artist knows the defect of his work and loves it, because it springs from the same source as its essential virtue. If Eva were perfect she would not be Eva.

Friendly gentleness, complete understanding, illimitable compliance, these things are love.

I do not admit a scolding, tyrannical, judging love, a love that abuses and destroys, to be love at all. It is possible to love and hate the same person at the same time. But two distinct feelings are in that. There are people whose natures are jealous, sad, unsatisfied, altogether devilish. Their love resembles their vices. Sometimes it contrives to put on a dazzling aspect. But vice is not love. . . .

. . . Often I ask myself this strange question: "Am I happy or wretched with Eva?" It seems to me that there is only a shadow to be dispersed, a thread to be untied, a little dust to be blown upon, and our happiness would be perfect and delightful. It is a nothing that poisons everything. I cannot define it.

I hope for a miracle. There are wizards, drugs, and faiths that suddenly transform.

But these charms work only upon solitary individuals. If you are bound to another being, all power belongs there. There is the lord of your health and of your soul. There you are lost or saved.

. . . It would be nothing to give one's life for a woman, if she noticed it. But all that one brings her is lawful tribute, hardly needing to be acknowledged. It is not a flaw in her character. It is simply that, her powers of feeling being so strong, she can swallow a man and still be hungry.

. . . This state of depression, of uneasiness and nerves, in which I see Eva amazes me. I believe only my presence can remedy it. It is not she who claims me now. It is I who run to her all the time in the hope of healing her.

I listen for hours to her strained chatter, with an air of approving it! I wait, without showing boredom or irritation, until the childish follies that tease her brain are spent, and the hour come at last when her enlightened reason will listen to sense. This discipline, this silence, this lie imposed upon my whole being in the face of the woman I love, this rôle of patient teacher and hypocrite, tires and exhausts me.

My presence is at the same time her remedy and her ill. She draws from it both hurt and comfort. I no longer know whether I should remain or go away.

Sometimes her nervousness defeats me. I have not been able to control an impatient movement, to avoid a word or a false step that resounds terribly. At once she seizes her advantage. She proves to me that I am negligent, heartless, a brute. I see my faults; I have difficulty in justifying myself. That movement, this absence or return, this allusion, must be explained: I must prove to her that my love is intact.

My reasons do not affect her. It is the length of the explanation that counts. If I talk long enough I may reach a point where her mind can be diverted.

. . . I shall not be consoled, even by an exact painting of my grief (by the pleasure, that is, of discussing a very interesting subject), while it exists in the shape of a woman who lives at my side, and whom I cannot tell whether to hail as my happiness or my damnation.

. . . For two months I have written nothing, because I no longer recognise myself. The only thoughts that found expression were bitter, and repugnant to me. A secret hardening, a cold like that of old age, a sort of unspeakable surfeit translates itself in me into a sneering at life. Only one point of sensibility is left me, and that touches the haunting worry about Eva. I am fallen into that utter humiliation when a man laments his existence.

Yet no check, no misfortune, no unhappiness that I could have imagined, neither sickness nor extreme poverty, nor destitution, nor injustice, would have troubled my mind and torn from me a complaint against sovereign life. And I would have accepted them honestly and without shift, without even resorting to that despicable imposture that is called humility.

. . . Eva falls into her whims again. She follows up a train of thought that is like a lesson learnt. You would say it was a habit, become mechanical and more and more marked, that leads her, without her making the least effort to get away from it. She seems to think that all effort on her part is useless, and that it is good for me to suffer and keep myself constantly occupied with the desolate state of affairs I have myself caused.

. . . Yesterday Eva read this note-book. It was in a drawer where she could find it. I never dreamed the idea of opening it would occur to her. There is nothing to wound her in it. At least I thought so. But it was not meant for her eyes. The reading of it was a frightful revelation to her, a violent shock from which she is not yet restored. She does not hear my explanations, because we are not speaking of the same text. She insists that I have depicted in her characteristics that have no sort of connection with reality. That I describe a hateful creature in whom she cannot recognise herself. On the other hand I have betrayed my true personality. It is brilliantly evident from these notes that I detest women.

. . . The woman I see Eva rejects as an abominable distortion of herself. And in the person that I am and that I think I know pretty well, she distinguishes in the light of the note-book a being I cannot allow. It is a battle of ghosts, an endless argument in unintelligible language.

I explain this disagreement to myself. We ought not to conclude so quickly that we know nothing of ourselves, nothing of others. The truth is, Eva was wrong to read phrases that concerned her, but were not meant for her eyes. She did not know how to see the truth of what I had written. In general, other people's opinions of us are prepared and adapted to our own temperaments before we hear them. If our ears are suddenly opened to a conversation friends or acquaintances are holding about us, the plain tone of voice may stab us to the heart. I don't mean by this that people are more sincere in such conversation. (On the contrary their truest feeling is probably manifest when they address us personally.) It simply means that those words were not intended for us.

. . . Eva watches me. She wants to prevent me from writing. She cannot bear to think of me adding new features to so much falsehood. I shall have to give up these notes, or somehow conceal the fact that I write them. And that's awkward. If I thought that a solemn sacrifice, like the destruction of my journal, would console her, I would nerve myself to it willingly. But that would change nothing. She would not even believe it a sacrifice.

. . . This morning Eva said to me: "I'm going to tell you a secret. The confession of it costs me something, and I would have wished to keep silence longer. But I want to show you how you may be deceived in people you think you know. You noticed that I was unwell and sad. The cause of my depression escaped you, because I tried to overcome it. At least, I succeeded in hiding it. It was this: I cannot get used to living here; I did not care much for Paris. But in the town I had forgotten the country and the changing seasons. Here I find a sort of mockery of the only country where I could live with pleasure. I cannot breathe any air but the air I knew at birth. When we left Paris on account of your health I would have liked to go back to Switzerland. I guessed that you wanted to settle here. I believed the sacrifice would be easy for me. But the lightest feelings end by mastering us. We ought not to burden ourselves with a duty too heavy for us: all the world suffers for it. But we realise that too late. Now that I have confessed my weakness, I believe I shall bear my exile better."

I heard these astounding words as in a dream. I tried to prove to her that we came here only because of her. When two people are not in harmony beforehand, it is useless for one to try to convince the other. We listen only in kindness.

I looked at once in my note-book. I thought to find my evidence and justification there. But I have omitted to note down the only thought that would have served me to-day. We have no vision for the future. We throw an insignificant letter into the basket. The whole success of a law-suit may depend upon it.

For myself I have no need to look back. I know why I left work which I liked, for whom I built this costly house here, which has ruined me.

. . . It's three months now since Eva told me her secret. Since that day she has been cheerful and reasonable. But I see only her effort. Even her gaiety distresses me. It seems to me that she gives me too much. I can no longer love a neighbourhood that makes her unhappy. I say to myself that if there is any place in the world where she would be completely happy, no obstacle would prevent me from hastening there.

. . . I thought I loved this country, and above all, our house. But it is clear it was Eva only that I loved. This house had a personality as long as I thought it built for her. This summer I have not walked in the garden as I used to do, looking at the flowers and gathering the seeds. I see misunderstandings in all the roses. . . .

Paris, June, 1929.

I shall add a few lines before I put this note-book away. I want to say, because I am sure of it, that Eva's going, and even her approaching marriage, are indifferent to me. I am calm now. (It was not so, those first months.) I experience no jealousy, no regret, no pain. That it should be he or another is all the same to me. Such as my life is nowadays, ordered plainly and in solitude, I am happy.

It's certain that the woman I called Eva, she who filled my life, had no connection with the creature of lies and folly whom I behold now.

She who left me, assumed instantly a strange face, which no longer has power to move me.

I have spoken of it to Etienne. He asserts that I had a true image of Eva. Eva has not changed, but one aspect of her escaped me, and it dimmed everything for me alone: she never loved me. He says that in those last years Eva found me a pathetic, shrunken creature, by the side of whom life was gloomy in the extreme. He says that she suffered, and that if she has a little happiness now we ought to be content. He thinks all for the best, and that things end by arranging themselves.

It amazes me that her religious beliefs should not have held her back. But it seems that they disappeared in her illness, when death drew so close.

I cannot think of all that. Not at all, because the past causes me pain. But I have difficulty in applying my mind to it. Because I no longer care.

It would be interesting to analyse my tranquillity. I shall be able to note down many curious observations upon my solitude, and upon this new state in which I find myself serene and healthy.

But I don't want to write any more about myself.

I want to create imaginary beings who will not lie to me. I have an idea for a novel. I want to demonstrate that the happiness a woman can give a man is the only happiness possible in this world. I believe I shall not be capable of writing anything else.

I have just re-read my journal. I don't want to keep it, but it may interest a few people. I'll forward it to Etienne, who will give it to C. He can take what he likes out of it, or publish it just as it is. But if my journal appears without revision, I wish it to end with Eva's illness. They can add in a note that the woman is dead.

What follows, and particularly what I have just written, after an interruption of eight months, ought not to be known.

That appears shocking, inhuman, and unnatural. There's no use in giving offence for nothing, nor in giving people to read what cannot be entirely explained.

And then you will be able to see in this tale the bitter and ironic story of a woman who monopolised and belittled a man whom she did not love, though he thought to love her. For me, it was another story, sad or gay, I don't know which, but certainly beautiful and profound, wise and touching. For life is always great. I do not wish you to laugh at it.

COLETTE

The Gentle Libertine, II

In our earlier selection from *The Gentle Libertine* (see pp. 33-45), Colette presents her heroine, Minne, as a hoyden. In the pages here reprinted, Minne and Antoine have been married for some time. She has been unfaithful because the union has proved routine and she has sought adventure and satisfaction elsewhere, but in vain. Antoine, aware of her infidelities, has never reproached her. A friend of Minne's counsels her to simulate love for her husband as a possible gate to happiness. The selection opens at a mountain resort near Nice.

SHIVERING in the open victoria drawn by two brisk bony nags, Minne huddled against her husband's shoulder. The carriage went up the road which led to the Riviera-Palace at the trot; abruptly, somber and pure, the sea appeared. A silver net danced there, around a long streak of light as pearly as the belly of a fish. . . .

"Oh, Antoine, do you see that?"

"I see it, darling. Do you like this country?"

"I don't like it, but I think it's beautiful."

"Why don't you like it?"

"I don't know. There's the sea, which I never saw before. Because of that endless water you feel far away, you're lonelier than anywhere else—"

He did not dare reaffirm his clasp of the floating white cloak. He felt more timid than a young man just engaged. Since the evening of the locked door, he had lived with Minne as if he were her brother, shuttlecocked back and forth from suspicion to remorse, from fear to anger. Now he marveled at himself when he thought that he had ever been Minne's husband, that he had dealt with her like a confident pasha, that he had possessed her without even asking her, "Do you want me?"

Those days were far away. And yet Minne was here against his arm, and the dust of the silver, as sparkling as hoarfrost, bore to Antoine's lips the perfume of lemon verbena.

They kept silence till they had reached the big room from which hygiene and fashion had banished draperies and padded upholstery.

Even the curtainless windows gleamed as nakedly as those of an apartment for rent, blinds open.

Still wrapped in her cloak, shaded by her hat which overflowed with roses, Minne went over toward the window filled by the luminous night. The gardens of the hotel hid Monte Carlo; there was nothing beyond the somber hedge of spindle trees but the moon and the sea.

Three tints—gray, silver and dark blue—were enough for the cold splendor of the picture, and Minne sharpened her eyes to follow the delicate line, the suave and mysterious pencil stroke which touched the sky at the uttermost end of the sea.

This shadowless night, which awakened a sensitiveness hitherto unknown in Minne's recalcitrant heart, was alive with all the noises of the day. A distant strain of music rose in gust after gust and, on the curve of the road, whips cracked and cartwheels squeaked.

Minne strove to reassemble the fragments of her soul, scattered over the sea, flying away beneath the moon; she climbed again, in anguish, toward a hearth that did not exist. No matter where she stopped, she never found Love enthroned there and the image of her dream was faceless. Ah, how magnificent everything is tonight, and how severely beautiful, and how cruel to the lonely!

Freezing, Minne turned back to Antoine. He was in his pyjamas, smoking a cigarette. She was on the point of holding out her trembling hands to him—those royal little hands whose palms did not know how to beg—hands that gave themselves proudly to be kissed, the fingers drooping like the bells of the white foxglove.

Antoine smoked his cigarette and seemed indifferent. But something had ripened in his tanned and honest face, something had saddened the great horse-nose, hollowed the amorous brigand's eyes. "Is he lost in thought?" wondered Minne, amazed. She had never thought so much about him. She found herself hoping that he would speak and that the sound of his voice would shatter at last this blinding night which rushed in through the open windows.

"Antoine?"

"Darling?"

"I'm cold."

"You ought to go to bed."

"Yes. Put the steamer rug over my bed. How cold it is, here!"

"The people around here say that it's quite exceptional. Besides, we can count on a magnificent day tomorrow. The wind's changing. You'll see the blue of the sea. We'll go up to La Turbie."

He redoubled his banalities as Minne's undressing showed her to him more and more naked, a new person in a strange room. She hurried over it, with as little modesty as a brother, ran to the bathroom and came out again shivering.

"Oh, this bed! The sheets are freezing!"

"Do you want me to—"

He was going to offer the warmth of his own big body, brown and living, and stopped short as if he had been about to say something improper.

"Do you want me to ask for a hot-water bag?"

"Isn't worth while!" cried Minne, her voice muffled by the sheet. "But tuck me up well. Pull up the comforter. Turn the lampshade the other way. Thank you, Antoine. Good night, Antoine."

He hurried up to her, at once happy and sad enough to cry. He moved deftly and silently about the bed. A gratitude like that of a dog filled his heart.

"Good night, Antoine," Minne repeated. She lifted her pale cold little face from the pillow.

"Good night, darling. Sleepy?"

"No."

"Want me to turn the light out?"

"Not right away. Talk to me. I think I've got a little fever. Sit down a minute."

He obeyed, with tender clumsiness.

"If you don't feel well here, Minne, we can go back earlier—I'll hurry up and—"

Minne hollowed the feather pillow from her nape and burrowed among her hair to get warm, like a chicken in the straw.

"I'm not asking to go back."

"You may be regretting Paris, your house, your—your habits—your—"

He turned his head away, changing his tone in spite of himself. Minne spied at him from behind her hair.

"I haven't any habits, Antoine."

He made a prodigious effort to keep quiet, but he went on.

"You might be in love with somebody. You might regret certain friends . . ."

"I haven't any friends, Antoine."

"Oh, you know, I'm just saying . . . I wasn't scolding you. I—I've been thinking that I was a fool, last month. When you fall in love, you don't do it on purpose, do you? I could no more keep you from loving somebody than I could keep the earth from turning around."

It seemed as if he were lifting up a mountain with each word. His subtle and fervent thought clothed itself in the heaviest and most vulgar words, and he suffered. Good God, not even to be able to explain to Minne that he would give her his life, his honor as a husband, his devotion as an accomplice even! How terrible not to be able to find words that would not wound her or put on the defensive this fragile child whom he had just tucked into bed. And what was she going to reply? If only she didn't cry! She was so nervous this evening. He swore to himself, at the end of his rope: "I'm willing to have her make me a cuckold, if only she doesn't cry!" He divined under her rumpled hair the intensity of the fine black eyes.

"I don't love anybody, Antoine."

"Is that true?"

"That is true."

He savored, head down, a great joy coupled with an equally great bitterness. She had said, "I don't love anybody," but she had not said that she loved Antoine.

"You are sweet, you know. I am content. You aren't cross at me any more?"

"Why should I be cross at you?"

"Because, well, because of everything. At one time I wanted to break up everything and separate, not because I loved you any less—on the contrary! You couldn't understand that, you . . ."

"Why not?"

"Those are the ideas of a man who's in love," he said simply.

Minne held out to him from her bed an amicable little hand.

"But I love you too, I assure you."

"Yes?" he questioned with a forced laugh. "Then I'd like to have you love me enough to ask me for everything that might give you pleasure —*everything* do you understand?—even things that you don't ordinarily expect from a husband; and then come and complain, do you see, as people do when they're little: 'So-and-so did this to me, Antoine, scold him or kill him,' or whatever you like."

She understood this time. She sat up in her bed, not knowing how to liberate the brusque tenderness which flowed from her to Antoine, like a brilliant prisoned snake. She was very pale, her eyes were large. What kind of a man was, then, this cousin Antoine?

Men had desired her, one to the point of wanting to kill her, the other to the point of delicately repulsing her. But not one had said to her: "Be happy. I don't ask anything for myself: I will give you clothes, candy, lovers, anything, everything."

What recompense could she give this martyr in pyjamas? Let him take at least all that Minne could give: her obedient body, her soft mouth, her shining hair of a slave.

"Come into my bed, Antoine."

In the rosy darkness Minne slept the sleep of the just. Outside, the whips cracked, the cartwheels squeaked as they had at midnight, and below the terrace there was a twanging of Italian mandolins. But the well of sleep separated Minne from the living world. Only the winged whining of the music slid itself into her dreams, to bother her like the buzzing of a bee.

The sunny, blessed sleep began to lift and Minne's thoughts mounted up towards the moment of waking by fits and starts, like a diver quitting the sea-floor of some miraculous ocean. She breathed deeply, hid her face in the hollow of her bent arm, sought dark, sweet sleep. A light, strange pain that made her whole body quiver like a harp persisted in waking her.

Before opening her eyes, she knew that she lay naked in her hair, but the unexpectedness of this detail meant nothing. Something had happened last night—but what? She must wake up quickly, all over, to remember it with greater joy. It was last night that a miracle succeeded in creating: Minne.

She smiled vaguely at the curtains. "The sun? Did we go to sleep? Yes, we slept for a long while. Antoine has gone out. I'll never have the courage to look at the time. It's lucky that we have lunch late, we two!" She repeated, "We two" with the proud naïveté of a bride and fell back on the pillows among her hair.

"Come into my bed, Antoine." She had told him that last night with the stubborn fairness of a prostitute who has only her body with which to pay men's love. And the unhappy fellow, whose recompense was so near to anguish, had thrown himself into Minne's arms.

At first he only wished to hold her close. He just put his arms around the upper part of her body, intoxicated to the point of weeping to know it so warm and perfumed, so little, so flexible in his grasp.

She saw, as she had seen so many times before, blackly above her a bearded faun whose great brown body breathed forth the well-known odor of amber and burning wood. But, today, Antoine had deserved more than she knew how to give. "He must really have me this time. Tonight must be his completely. To make him wholly happy, I'll have to imitate the sigh, and cry of his own joy. I'll go, *'Ah! Ah!'* like Irene Chaulieu while I try to think about something else."

She slid out of the long nightgown and lay back upon the pillows, passive, with the pure smile of a saint who defies the demons and the torturers.

He took her gently. She half-opened her eyes; those of Antoine, still master of himself, seemed to look for a Minne beyond Minne. She remembered Irene Chaulieu's lessons and sighed, "Ah! Ah!" like a swooning schoolgirl, then held her peace, ashamed. His brows knitted in a hard, voluptuous mask of Pan, "Ah! Ah!" she said again, in spite of herself, for a mounting, almost intolerable anguish tightened her chest like the stifling of sobs about to burst.

She groaned for a third time, and Antoine was troubled at hearing the voice of Minne who had never yet cried out. Now she trembled all over, her toes contracted, she turned her head from right to left and back again like a sick child. She shut her fists, and Antoine could see the delicate muscles of her jaws constricting.

At last she turned unknown eyes to him and hummed, "Your Minne—your Minne—yours—" while he felt her grow faint and lie bruised against him, rippling with little shudders.

Minne, seated in the middle of her tumbled bed, listened to the tumult of the joyous blood at the bottom of her heart. She no longer longed for anything or regretted anything. Life strode before her, easy, sensual, banal as a pretty girl. Antoine had performed this miracle. Minne stretched herself and listened for her husband's footsteps. She smiled in the gloom, with a bit of scorn for the Minne of yesterday, that dry child looking for the impossible. There was no longer anything impossible, there was no longer anything to seek, one had but to bloom, watered with delight, to grow pink and happy and wholly fed by the pride of being a woman like other women. Antoine was going to come back. She must get up, run to the sunlight that pierced the curtains, order a bowl of steaming velvety chocolate. The day would go by lazily, Minne would think of nothing, hanging on Antoine's arm. Of nothing but beginning such days and nights all over again. Antoine is great. Antoine is marvelous.

The door opened, a flood of yellow light inundated the room.

"Antoine!"

"Minne darling!"

They clasped each other, he fresh from the wind and the open air, she moist and odorous from her night of love.

"Darling, there certainly is a sun! It's summer! Get up right away!"

She rushed across the carpet, ran to the window and recoiled, blinded.

"Oh! It's all blue!"

The sea lay at peace, without a wrinkle in her velvet robe where the sun shone like a silver disk. Minne, Minne, dazzled and naked, followed with delighted stupefaction the tapping of a branch of pink pelargonium against the window pane. Had the flower grown up in the night? Those roses with the russet faces, Minne certainly had not seen them yesterday.

NOTE ON GERTRUDE STEIN'S

"MELANCTHA"

Melanctha Herbert, a Mulatto, lives in Bridgepoint, a small town with a Negro community. Her good friend is Rose Johnson. But Melanctha met Jane Harden, an almost-white Negro, who initiated her into "life"; and however much she disapproves of some of Jane's teachings, Melanctha always remains grateful.

She meets Jefferson Campbell, an upright young Negro doctor of a religious and virtuous family. Jefferson had been interested in Jane, but his friendship with Melanctha ripens into a love affair. The rise and fall of their emotions in this relationship is the central theme of "Melanctha."

GERTRUDE STEIN

Melanctha

The matriarch of American Futurism, Gertrude Stein (born in 1874) was a student of the psychologist William James and specialized in brain anatomy at Johns Hopkins University. In 1903, abandoning her scientific interests, she moved to Paris and began a controversial career in literary experiment. *Three Lives* (1909), from which our selection is taken, though written in original, compelling rhythms, is easily intelligible—and deeply human. But her later writing abandoned sequential sentences, the procession of subject and predicate, and other conventional modes of expression. With *Tender Buttons* she launched her new verbal career, and soon became the critic's target and the parodist's delight. But she persisted and at length became the inspiration of the little army of American exiles who shaped a new literature after 1918. With *Lucy Church Amiably* she pushed verbal abstraction to a point where words no longer recalled objective data but had rhythm, sonority, and sheer mass that followed laws of their own. In two autobiographical books she made concessions to the arrested and in *Wars I Have Seen* (1944) communication is restored. Miss Stein is a great artist; she is surely a great phenomenon.

IT was summer now, and they had warm sunshine to wander. It was summer now, and Jeff Campbell had more time to wander, for colored people never get sick so much in summer. It was summer now, and there was a lovely silence everywhere, and all the noises, too, that they heard around them were lovely ones, and added to the joy, in these warm days, they loved so much to be together.

They talked some to each other in these days, did Jeff Campbell and Melanctha Herbert, but always in these days their talking more and more was like it always is with real lovers. Jeff did not talk so much now about what he before always had been thinking. Sometimes Jeff would be, as if he was just waking from himself to be with Melanctha, and then he would find he had been really all the long time with her, and he had really never needed to be doing any thinking.

It was sometimes pure joy Jeff would be talking to Melanctha, in these warm days he loved so much to wander with her. Sometimes Jeff would lose all himself in a strong feeling. Very often now, and always with more joy in his feeling, he would find himself, he did not know how or what it was he had been thinking. And Melanctha always loved very well to make him feel it. She always now laughed a little at him, and went back a little in him to his before, always thinking, and she teased him with his always now being so good with her in his feeling, and then she would so well and freely, and with her pure, strong ways of reaching, she would give him all the love she knew now very well, how much he always wanted to be sure he really had it.

And Jeff took it straight now, and he loved it, and he felt, strong, the joy of all this being, and it swelled out full inside him, and he poured it all out back to her in freedom, in tender kindness, and in joy, and in gentle brother fondling. And Melanctha loved him for it always, her Jeff Campbell now, who never did things ugly, for her, like all the men she always knew before always had been doing to her. And they loved it always, more and more, together, with this new feeling they had now, in these long summer days so warm; they, always together now, just these two so dear, more and more to each other always, and the summer evenings when they wandered, and the noises in the full streets, and the music of the organs, and the dancing, and the warm smell of the people, and of dogs and of the horses, and all the joy of the strong, sweet pungent, dirty, moist, warm Negro southern summer.

Every day now, Jeff seemed to be coming nearer, to be really loving. Every day now, Melanctha poured it all out to him, with more freedom. Every day now, they seemed to be having more and more, both together, of this strong, right feeling. More and more every day now they seemed to know more really, what it was each other one was always feeling. More and more now every day Jeff found in himself, he felt more trusting. More and more every day now, he did not think anything in words about what he was always doing. Every day now more and more Melanctha would let out to Jeff her real, strong feeling.

One day there had been much joy between them, more than they ever yet had had with their new feeling. All the day they had lost themselves in warm wandering. Now they were lying there and resting, with a green, bright, light-flecked world around them.

What was it that now really happened to them? What was it that Melanctha did, that made everything get all ugly for them? What was it that Melanctha felt then, that made Jeff remember all the feeling he had had in him when Jane Harden told him how Melanctha had learned to be so very understanding? Jeff did not know how it was that it had happened to him. It was all green, and warm, and very lovely to him, and now Melanctha somehow had made it all so ugly for him. What was it Melanctha was now doing with him? What was it he used to be thinking was the right way for him and all the colored people to be always trying to make it right, the way they should be always living? Why was Melanctha Herbert now all so ugly for him?

Melanctha Herbert somehow had made him feel deeply just then, what very more it was that she wanted from him. Jeff Campbell now felt in him what everybody always had needed to make them really understanding, to him. Jeff felt a strong disgust inside him; not for Melanctha herself, to him, not for himself really, in him, not for what it was that everybody wanted, in them; he only had disgust because he never could know really in him, what it was he wanted, to be really right in understanding, for him, he only had disgust because he never could know really what it was really right to him to be always doing, in the things he had before believed in, the things he before had believed in for himself and for all the colored people, the living regular, and the never wanting to be always having new things, just to keep on, always being in excitements. All the old thinking now came up very strong inside him. He sort of turned away then, and threw Melanctha from him.

Jeff never, even now, knew what it was that moved him. He never, even now, was ever sure, he really knew what Melanctha was, when she was real herself, and honest. He thought he knew, and then there came to him some moment, just like this one, when she really woke him up to be strong in him. Then he really knew he could know nothing. He knew then, he never could know what it was she really wanted with him. He knew then he never could know really what it was he felt inside him. It was all so mixed up inside him. All he knew was he wanted very badly Melanctha should be there beside him, and he wanted very badly, too, always to throw her from him. What was it really that Melanctha wanted with him? What was it really, he, Jeff Campbell, wanted she should give him? "I certainly did think now," Jeff Campbell groaned inside him, "I certainly did think now I really was knowing all right, what I wanted. I certainly did really think now I was knowing how to be trusting with Melanctha. I certainly did think it was like that now with me sure, after all I've been through all this time with her. And now I certainly do know I don't know anything that's very real about her. Oh the good Lord help and keep me!" and Jeff groaned hard inside him, and he buried his face deep in the green grass underneath him, and Melanctha Herbert was very silent there beside him.

Then Jeff turned to look and see her. She was lying very still there by him, and the bitter water on her face was biting. Jeff was so very sorry then, all over and inside him, the way he always was when Melanctha had been deep hurt by him. "I didn't mean to be so bad again to you, Melanctha, dear one," and he was very tender to her. "I certainly didn't never mean to go to be so bad to you, Melanctha, darling. I certainly don't know, Melanctha, darling, what it is makes me act so to you sometimes, when I certainly ain't meaning anything like I want to hurt you. I certainly don't mean to be so bad, Melanctha, only it comes so quick on me before I know what I am acting to you. I certainly am all sorry, hard, to be so bad to you, Melanctha, darling." "I suppose, Jeff," said Melanctha, very low and bitter, "I suppose you are always thinking, Jeff, somebody had ought to be ashamed with us two together, and you certainly do think you don't see any way to it, Jeff, for me to be feeling that way ever, so you certainly don't see any way to it, only to do it just so often for me. That certainly is the way always with you, Jeff Campbell, if I understand you right the way you are always acting to me. That certainly is right the way I am saying it to you now, Jeff Campbell. You certainly didn't anyway trust me now no more, did you, when you just acted so bad to me. I certainly am right the way I say it Jeff now to you. I certainly am right when I ask you for it now, to tell me what I ask you, about not trusting me more then again, Jeff, just like you never really knew me. You certainly never did trust me just then, Jeff, you hear me?" "Yes, Melanctha," Jeff answered slowly. Melanctha paused. "I guess I certainly never can forgive you this time, Jeff Campbell," she said firmly. Jeff paused too, and thought a little. "I certainly am afraid you never can no more now again, Melanctha," he said sadly.

They lay there very quiet now a long time, each one thinking very hard on their own trouble. At last Jeff began again to tell Melanctha what it was he was always thinking with her. "I certainly do know, Melanctha, you certainly now don't want any more to be hearing me just talking, but you see, Melanctha, really, it's just like this way always with me. You see, Melanctha, it's like this way now all the time with me. You remember, Melanctha, what I was once telling to you, when I didn't know you very long together, about how I certainly never did know more than just two kinds of ways of loving, one way the way it is good to be in families and the other kind of way, like animals are all the time just with each other, and how I didn't ever like that last kind of way much for any of the colored people. You see Melanctha, it's like this way with me. I got a new feeling now, you been teaching to me, just like I told you once, just like a new religion to me, and I see perhaps what really loving is like, like really having everything together, new things, little pieces all different, like I always before been thinking was bad to be having, all go together like, to make one good big feeling. You see, Melanctha, it's certainly like that you make me been seeing, like I never know before any way there was of all kinds of loving to come together to make one way really truly lovely. I see that now, sometimes, the way you certainly been teaching me, Melanctha, really, and then I love you those times, Melanctha, like a real religion, and then it comes over me all sudden, I don't know anything real about you Melanctha, dear one, and then it comes over me sudden, perhaps I certainly am wrong now, thinking all this way so lovely, and not thinking now any more the old way I always before was always thinking, about what was the right way for me, to live regular and all the colored people, and then I think, perhaps, Melanctha you are really just a bad one, and I think, perhaps I certainly am doing it so because I just am too anxious to be just having all the time excitements, like I don't ever like really to be doing when I know it, and then I always get so bad to you, Melanctha, and I can't help it with myself then, never, for I want to be always right really in the ways, I have to do them. I certainly do very badly want to be right, Melanctha, the only way I know is right Melanctha really, and I don't know any way, Melanctha, to find out really, whether my old way, the way I always used to be thinking, or the new way, you make so like a real religion to me sometimes, Melanctha, which way certainly is the real right way for me to be always thinking, and then I certainly am awful good and sorry, Melanctha, I always give you so much trouble, hurting you with the bad ways I am acting. Can't you help me to any way, to make it all straight for me, Melanctha, so I know right and real what it is I should be acting. You see, Melanctha, I don't want always to be a coward with you, if I only could know certain what was the right way for me to be acting. I certainly am real sure, Melanctha, that would be the way I would be acting, if I only knew it sure for certain now, Melanctha. Can't you help me any way to find out real and true, Melanctha, dear one. I certainly do badly want to know always, the way I should be acting."

"No, Jeff, dear, I certainly can't help you much in that kind of trouble you are always having. All I can do now, Jeff, is to just keep certainly with my believing you are good always, Jeff, and though you certainly do hurt me bad, I always got strong faith in you, Jeff, more in you certainly, than you seem to be having in your acting to me, always so bad, Jeff."

"You certainly are very good to me, Melanctha, dear one," Jeff said, after a long, tender silence. "You certainly are very good to me, Melanctha, darling, and me so bad to you always, in my acting. Do you love me good, and right, Melanctha, always?" "Always and always, you be sure of that now you have me. Oh you Jeff, you always be so stupid." "I certainly never can say now you ain't right, when you say that to me so, Melanctha," Jeff answered. "Oh, Jeff dear, I love you always, you know that now, all right, for certain. If you don't know it right now, Jeff, really, I prove it to you now, for good and always." And they lay there a long time in their loving, and then Jeff began again with his happy free enjoying.

"I sure am a good boy to be learning all the time the right way you are teaching me, Melanctha, darling," began Jeff Campbell, laughing, "You can't say no, never, I ain't a good scholar for you to be teaching now, Melanctha, and I am always so ready to come to you every day, and never playing hooky ever from you. You can't say ever, Melanctha, now can you, I ain't a real good boy to be always studying to be learning to be real bright, just like my teacher. You can't say ever to me, I ain't a good boy to you now, Melanctha." "Not near so good, Jeff Campbell, as such a good, patient kind of teacher, like me, who never teaches any ways it ain't good her scholars should be knowing, ought to be really having, Jeff, you hear me? I certainly don't think I am right for you, to be forgiving always, when you are so bad, and I so patient, with all this hard teaching always." "But you do forgive me always, sure, Melanctha, always?" "Always and always, you be sure Jeff, and I certainly am afraid I never can stop with my forgiving, you always are going to be so bad to me, and I always going to have to be so good with my forgiving." "Oh! Oh!" cried Jeff Campbell, laughing, "I ain't going to be so bad for always, sure I ain't, Melanctha, my own darling. And sure you do forgive me really, and sure you love me true and really, sure, Melanctha?" "Sure, sure, Jeff, boy, sure now and always, sure now you believe me, sure you do, Jeff, always." "I sure hope I does, with all my heart, Melanctha, darling." "I sure do that same, Jeff, dear boy, now you really know what it is to be loving, and I prove it to you now so, Jeff, you never can be forgetting. You see now, Jeff, good and certain, what I always before been saying to you, Jeff, now." "Yes, Melanctha, darling," murmured Jeff, and he was very happy in it, and so the two of them now in the warm air of the sultry, southern, Negro sunshine, lay there for a long time just resting.

And now for a real long time there was no open trouble any more between Jeff Campbell and Melanctha Herbert. . . .

And now they were very happy in each other and then they were silent and then they became a little sadder and then they were very quiet once more with each other.

"Yes I certainly do love you Jeff!" Melanctha said and she was very dreamy. "Sure, Melanctha." "Yes Jeff sure, but not the way you are now ever thinking. I love you more and more seems to me Jeff always, and I certainly do trust you more and more always to me when I know you. I do love you Jeff, sure yes, but not the kind of way of loving you are ever thinking it now Jeff with me. I ain't got certainly no hot passion any more now in me. You certainly have killed all that kind of feeling now Jeff in me. You certainly do know that Jeff, now the way I am always, when I am loving with you. You certainly do know that Jeff, and that's the way you certainly do like it now in me. You certainly don't mind now Jeff, to hear me say this to you."

Jeff Campbell was hurt so that it almost killed him. Yes he certainly did know now what it was to have real hot love in him, and yet Melanctha certainly was right, he did not deserve she should ever give it to him. "All right Melanctha I ain't ever kicking. I always will give you certainly always everything you want that I got in me. I take anything you want now to give me. I don't say never Melanctha it don't hurt me, but I certainly don't say ever Melanctha it ought ever to be any different to me." And the bitter tears rose up in Jeff Campbell, and they came and choked his voice to be silent, and he held himself hard to keep from breaking.

"Good-night Melanctha," and Jeff was very humble to her. "Good-night Jeff, I certainly never did mean any way to hurt you. I do love you, sure Jeff every day more and more, all the time I know you." "I know Melanctha, I know, it's never nothing to me. You can't help it, anybody ever the way they are feeling. It's all right now Melanctha, you believe me, good-night now Melanctha, I got now to leave you, good-by Melanctha, sure don't look so worried to me, sure Melanctha I come again soon to see you." And then Jeff stumbled down the steps, and he went away fast to leave her.

And now the pain came hard and harder in Jeff Campbell, and he groaned, and it hurt him so, he could not bear it. And the tears came, and his heart beat, and he was hot and worn and bitter in him.

Now Jeff knew very well what it was to love Melanctha. Now Jeff Campbell knew he was really understanding. Now Jeff knew what it was to be good to Melanctha. Now Jeff was good to her always.

Slowly Jeff felt it a comfort in him to have it hurt so, and to be good to Melanctha always. Now there was no way Melanctha ever had had to bear things from him, worse than he now had it in him. Now Jeff was strong inside him. Now with all the pain there was peace in him. Now he knew he was understanding, now he knew he had a hot love in him, and he was good always to Melanctha Herbert who was the one had made him have it. Now he knew he could be good, and not cry out for help to her to teach him how to bear it. Every day Jeff felt himself more a strong man, the way he once had thought was his real self, the way he knew it. Now Jeff Campbell had real wisdom in him, and it did not make him bitter when it hurt him, for Jeff knew now all through him that he was really strong to bear it.

And so now Jeff Campbell could see Melanctha often, and he was patient, and always very friendly to her, and every day Jeff Campbell understood Melanctha Herbert better. And always Jeff saw Melanctha could not love him the way he needed she should do it. Melanctha Herbert had no way she ever really could remember.

And now Jeff knew there was a man Melanctha met very often, and perhaps she wanted to try to have this man to be good, for her. Jeff Campbell never saw the man Melanctha Herbert perhaps now wanted. Jeff Campbell only knew very well that there was one. Then there was Rose that Melanctha now always had with her when she wandered.

Jeff Campbell was very quiet to Melanctha. He said to her, now he thought he did not want to come any more especially to see her. When they met, he always would be glad to see her, but now he never would go anywhere any more to meet her. Sure he knew she always would have a deep love in him for her. Sure she knew that. "Yes Jeff, I always trust you Jeff, I certainly do know that all right." Jeff Campbell said, all right he never could say anything to reproach her. She knew always that he really had learned all through him how to love her. "Yes, Jeff, I certainly do know that." She knew now she could always trust him. Jeff always would be loyal to her though now she never was any more to him like a religion, but he never could forget the real sweetness in her. That Jeff must remember always, though now he never can trust her to be really loving to any man for always, she never did have any way she ever could remember. If she ever needed anybody to be good to her, Jeff Campbell always would do anything he could to help her. He never can forget the things she taught him so he could be really understanding, but he never any more wants to see her. He be like a brother to her always, when she needs it, and he always will be a good friend to her. Jeff Campbell certainly was sorry never any more to see her, but it was good that they now knew each other really. "Good-by Jeff you always been very good always to me." "Good-by Melanctha you know you always can trust yourself to me." "Yes, I know, I know Jeff, really." "I certainly got to go now Melanctha, from you. I go this time, Melanctha really," and Jeff Campbell went away and this time he never looked back to her. This time Jeff Campbell just broke away and left her.

* * * * * * *

Jem Richards, the new man Melanctha had begun to know now, was a dashing kind of fellow, who had to do with fine horses and with racing. Sometimes Jem Richards would be betting and would be good and lucky, and be making lots of money. Sometimes Jem would be betting badly, and then he would not be having any money.

Jem Richards was a straight man. Jem Richards always knew that by and by he would win again and pay it, and so Jem mostly did win again, and then he always paid it.

Jem Richards was a man other men always trusted. Men gave him money when he lost all his, for they all knew Jem Richards would win again, and when he did win they knew, and they were right, that he would pay it.

Melanctha Herbert all her life had always loved to be with horses. Melanctha liked it that Jem knew all about fine horses. He was a reckless man was Jem Richards. He knew how to win out, and always all her life, Melanctha Herbert loved successful power.

Melanctha Herbert always liked Jem Richards better. Things soon began to be very strong between them.

Jem was more game even than Melanctha. Jem always had known what it was to have real wisdom. Jem had always all his life been understanding.

Jem Richards made Melanctha Herbert come fast with him. He never gave her any time with waiting. Soon Melanctha always had Jem with her. Melanctha did not want anything better. Now in Jem Richards, Melanctha found everything she had ever needed to content her.

Melanctha was now less and less with Rose Johnson. Rose did not think much of the way Melanctha now was going. Jem Richards was all right, only Melanctha never had no sense of the right kind of way she should be doing. Rose often was telling Sam now, she did not like the fast way Melanctha was going. Rose told it to Sam, and to all the girls and men, when she saw them. But Rose was nothing just then to Melanctha. Melanctha Herbert now only needed Jem Richards to be with her.

And things were always getting stronger between Jem Richards and Melanctha Herbert. Jem Richards began to talk now as if he wanted to get married to her. Jem was deep in his love now for her. And as for Melanctha, Jem was all the world now to her. And so Jem gave her a ring, like white folks, to show he was engaged to her, and would by and by be married to her. And Melanctha was filled full with joy to have Jem so good to her.

Melanctha always loved to go with Jem to the races. Jem had been lucky lately with his betting, and he had a swell turn-out to drive in, and Melanctha looked very handsome there beside him.

Melanctha was very proud to have Jem Richards want her. Melanctha loved it the way Jem knew how to do it. Melanctha loved Jem and loved that he should want her. She loved it too, that he wanted to be married to her. Jem Richards was a straight decent man, whom other men always looked up to and trusted. Melanctha needed badly a man to content her.

Melanctha's joy made her foolish. Melanctha told everybody about how Jem Richards, that swell man who owned all those fine horses and was so game, nothing ever scared him, was engaged to be married to her, and that was the ring he gave her. . . .

Melanctha went that night to meet Jem Richards who had promised to be at the old place to meet her. Jem Richards was absent in his manner to her. By and by he began to talk to her, about the trip he was going to take soon, to see if he could get some luck back in his betting. Melanctha trembled, was Jem too now going to leave her. Jem Richards talked some more then to her, about the bad luck he always had now, and how he needed to go away to see if he could make it come out any better.

Then Jem stopped, and then he looked straight at Melanctha.

"Tell me Melanctha right and true, you don't care really nothing more about me now Melanctha," he said to her.

"Why you ask me that, Jem Richards," said Melanctha.

"Why I ask you that Melanctha, God Almighty, because I just don't give a damn now for you any more Melanctha. That the reason I was asking."

Melanctha never could have for this an answer. Jem Richards waited and then he went away and left her.

Melanctha Herbert never again saw Jem Richards. Melanctha never again saw Rose Johnson, and it was hard to Melanctha never any more to see her. Rose Johnson had worked in to be the deepest of all Melanctha's emotions.

"No, I don't never see Melanctha Herbert no more now," Rose would say to anybody who asked her about Melanctha. "No, Melanctha she never comes here no more now, after we had all that trouble with her acting so bad with them kind of men she liked so much to be with. She don't never come to no good Melanctha Herbert don't, and me and Sam don't want no more to see her. She didn't do right ever the way I told her. Melanctha just wouldn't, and I always said it to her, if she don't be more kind of careful, the way she always had to be acting, I never did want no more she should come here in my house no more to see me. I ain't no ways ever against any girl having any kind of a way, to have a good time like she wants it, but not that kind of a way Melanctha always had to do it. I expect some day Melanctha kill herself, when she act so bad like she do always, and then she get so awful blue. Melanctha always says that's the only way she ever can think it a easy way for her to do. No, I always am real sorry for Melanctha, she never was no just common kind of nigger, but she don't never know not with all the time I always was telling it to her, no she never no way could learn, what was the right way she should do. I certainly don't never want no kind of harm to come bad to Melanctha, but I certainly do think she will most kill herself some time, the way she always say it would be easy way for her to do. I never see nobody ever could be so awful blue."

But Melanctha Herbert never really killed herself because she was so blue, though often she thought this would be really the best way for her to do. Melanctha never killed herself, she only got a bad fever and went into the hospital where they took good care of her and cured her.

When Melanctha was well again, she took a place and began to work and to live regular. Then Melanctha got very sick again, she began to cough and sweat and be so weak she could not stand to do her work.

Melanctha went back to the hospital, and there the Doctor told her she had the consumption, and before long she would surely die. They sent her where she would be taken care of, a home for poor consumptives, and there Melanctha stayed until she died.

PART TWO

BOOK IV: *Rarities*

NOTE ON RAYNER HEPPENSTALL'S

"THE BLAZE OF NOON"

Louis Duncan, a blind masseur, tells the story in the first person. He visits "Rose Gwavas," the Cornwall home of his client, Mrs. Nance. At the station he meets her niece and nephew, Sophie and John Madron. Sophie is twenty and she has had many lovers. Duncan and Sophie are attracted to each other, but Mrs. Nance wishes him to meet her little cousin, Amity Nance, who is a blind deaf-mute. Duncan resists; he has developed a deep love affair with Sophie, and he is a patient and experienced lover.

When Amity arrives, she proves to be charming and womanly, and Duncan now fancies himself in love with her. On Midsummer's Eve, the night of bonfires, Amity and Duncan get drunk, and they go home roaring—Amity making the wild "laughter" of a mute who has never heard laughter. Duncan puts her to bed, and she embraces him and chuckles, uttering strange sounds which she thinks to be his name. Duncan is strangely upset.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL

The Blaze of Noon

With the publication of his *First Poems* (1935) in his native England, Rayner Heppenstall attained celebrity at a bound. His political activity on behalf of Leftist writing did not prepare one for his *Apology for Dancing* (1936), a vivid story of the ballet, excellently documented. Then followed in rapid succession *Sebastian* (1937) and the novel from which our selection is made, *The Blaze of Noon,* issued with a foreword by Elizabeth Bowen, who declared it to be writing of a type that would be in evidence a decade hence. A blind masseur, invited to a country home, meets Sophie, a normal girl, and later Amity, a deaf-mute. In this novel, love, by way of the senses abstracted from sight, or even more reduced, is rendered consciously and specifically. Heppenstall opposes the instinctive attitude of D. H. Lawrence by calculated effects and for this he uses those who apparently need instinct the more: the blind, the deaf. In 1940 he issued a volume of poems, *The Blind Man's Flowers Are Green,* in which sardonic verses on conservatives alternate with a paen to an ordurous bigot, Léon Bloy. Heppenstall's originality remains eerie and unpredictable.

I HAVE an extremely good memory. It is necessary that I should have, because I have fewer means of maintaining the continuity of my life from one day to the next than people have whose eyes recognize for them what has been seen before and warn the mind continually of the strange, the new and the incomprehensible wherever it may present itself. In a very definite sense I believe that good memory is a guarantee of my integrity, my own singleness of life. At any rate, when I forget something or when my remembrance of something is vague and blurred, I begin to worry and realize that at that point occurred a failure in living, a confusion of purpose, an evasion of whatever issue it was that I now try without success to conjure up again in all its detail.

Up to the time of Amity Nance's arrival every day and almost every hour of my stay at Rose Gwavas survives in my mind with a high degree of clarity, if I except the two or three days of Sophie's first retirement before she committed herself in any way to me. But after Amity Nance's arrival the days tend to run into each other. As I search about in memory for this or that particular incident and mood I find myself running into banks of mist, and occasionally into total oblivion, just as if the east wind at that time had saturated my mind, too, with the sea-fret.

I should like to understand this completely. But if I did I should understand myself completely. And if that were possible my understanding of all things would be complete.

Besides, if I understood I should remember again, and so there would be nothing to understand.

As it is, I understand in part. And I find that when some effort of mind enables me to understand a little better the weather lifts in more places than one and I also remember a little better.

We do not remember pain. This is a commonplace by now. There is no memory of pain. And the reason for this, as it seems to me, is that pain is outside our life, is alien to it, is a partial death and therefore a simple negation of life or a lapse from it. I have no doubt that a sick man remembers his pain so long as he remains sick, and it is possible that the dead are aware of death if awareness of a negative is possible. But a healthy man does not remember pain, and a man back from the edge of the grave cannot recollect anything of his death. If we try to look back on these things we see ourselves remotely and ineffectually as a stranger is seen. We remember that we gnawed the pillow or bit our own hands with pain because that was vital action, the action of a healthy body resisting its pain, but the pain itself is out of us, a fragment of deathliness that we cast out, and we regard our own strange, writhing movements now without comprehension. They not only seem, but they are the contortions of a stranger.

It is the same with confusion of mind from which we have truly emerged and with guilt from which we are now absolved. They were interruptions, falsifications of our life, assailing us from without, compelling us to a private, imprisoned life, and now we can only stand apart and look back wonderingly upon the words, thoughts, deeds, wishes and prayers they forced out of us at the time.

I look back upon the very brief period of Amity Nance's presence in my life, and I see the mist clearing in patches, lifting on a breeze and closing in again, here and there shot through with a ray of light unusually clear, in other places full of the most eerie fantasies of light. These patches of illumination represent the good, the living moments. The rest is, I feel, permanently obscured for me by the confusion, the falsity of mind which held me back from normal contact with reality at the moment. And the period most obstinately shrouded in mist is composed of the few days as it seems, but it may have been two or three weeks, between the day after Amity's arrival and the moment at which I presently realized that a fight of some kind was on and I'd better watch out.

During that period I was clenched hard against Amity Nance's reality. I spent a good deal of time with her, and even more time numbing myself against her, but I would not allow the reality of her presence to impinge upon me. I was treating her as an institution, talking with her as a duty, as if I were giving her private tuition in the elements of a subject of which I was master and only doing so for the sake of earning a livelihood.

But here and there the reality began to penetrate my defenses, and those penetrations are the moments that I do remember.

For instance, the moment at which Amity quite unexpectedly spelled into my hand the words:

"I think we ought to stop for to-day. You've been frowning so much, and your hands are so listless, I feel sure you're too worried to be bothered with me. I talk so much."

How stupid I had been. It had not dawned on me how subtle her touch was, and that all this while that our hands had been rapidly spelling out a conversation, the edge of her little finger-nail had been exploring deeper into my palm, or that while I was talking aloud, and she reading the movements of my lips, she had also been examining the structure and the mood expressed in the muscles of my face, and that in the space of a few days she had probably learnt a hundred times more about me than I about her. I felt as if I had been set guessing by a child of five, and then I had a feeling of relief because I understood that reality and liveliness of some kind Amity Nance undoubtedly had and I was a fool to ignore it.

I suddenly realized, too, that although one organ did service for both, the language of her fingers, as she used the manual alphabet, was pure social tittle-tattle, that the exploration was infinitely more real for her and that the language she used for purposes of true self-expression had not yet come into being. I had been revolted by the triteness of her language, the everlasting use of words like "beautiful," "kind," "good," and what I took to be the corresponding triteness and falsity of her receptiveness to experience. Now I wondered. It must be that she had a darker, more vivid awareness, too, for which Miss Brophy had not catered.

But I at once thought:

"Her sense of touch is infinitely more delicate than Sophie's, and Sophie's fingers are not inept."

I compared. And that was bad. It robbed the moment of its worth.

And it was strange. I did not even discover what things I hated about Amity Nance until the moment at which I discovered that I did not hate them after all.

One of these things was her personal cleanliness.

It came from Miss Brophy. And Miss Brophy was a woman without coquetry. I do not know what soap she got for Amity when they were in Falmouth. Carbolic, I should think, or at best some pure, unscented oatmeal. And Amity Nance had that kind of feel about her, and I hated it. I found it obscene. Powder, rouge, liquid scent, scented shampoos were things that Amity had not been introduced to. She smelled clean as a little girl or an old, dry woman smells clean, and her clothes matched the smell, being prim and without interest either to herself or to anybody else, and therefore in a woman of just under thirty unnatural. I hated these things, and I did not know I was hating them. I thought it was Amity herself who repelled me.

I remember that for a few minutes one afternoon just before tea the drizzle stopped, and the sun came out.

Amity was quickly aware of the fact. Like a very sensitive barometer, I thought.

I made upon her fingers the words:

"Perhaps you would like to go out into the garden now."

I did not care very much whether she would like to go out into the garden or not. I wanted to go out into the garden. It was oppressive to sit here tutoring the *New Beacon's* delight in one or another of the dismal, elementary sub-divisions of human knowledge, pretending all the while that it was intimate conversation.

The sodden earth began to steam under the sun and yield up all its delicious, pent-up odors. It pleased and refreshed me. Amity was enraptured. I heard her breathing deeply, lingeringly, and her movements quickened. The fingers with which she preserved her contact with me became excited. She was alive. And for the moment her presence lost its oppressiveness for me.

My nostrils selected and chose among the many odors, the earth itself and a late hyacinth. And I was baffled for a moment by the absence of the odor I thought of as woman beside me and realized then that I had become so used to cosmetics that their odor was the one which had received the name of presence of woman in my mind.

I thought:

"Cosmetics are used to excite men whose nostrils are utterly dulled, and here am I unable to tolerate the presence of a woman without that sign of her womanhood flaunted before me. Yet I am one who regarded himself as in all senses but one immeasurably superior to ordinary men."

And I was tempted to rejoice in Amity Nance's presence, but stifled the temptation.

I came alive, I think, the day on which she opened her mouth and spoke.

As if to provoke that effect I had just allowed my fingers to travel over her face and down upon her shoulders and arms.

I knew that with her infinitely light, flying fingers she had already taken the cast of my features. I must, in my clumsier way, do the same by her. Not because I wanted to know her. I would have preferred to remain completely aloof. But it was something expected of me by Sophie, something expected of me by Mrs. Nance and something whose continued absence left me at a disadvantage. Sophie had enjoined it. And I knew that Sophie at least was right.

How easily the feelings appropriate to adolescence recapture the mind as soon as it becomes self-engrossed.

For half an hour I had sat beside Amity Nance speculating whether I could permit myself to examine her face or not. I was like a boy of seventeen wondering how best to start things with a girl, what her response would be to an arm about her waist, whether then the attempt to kiss would result in a smacked face, and whether after that a more intimate caress would call forth tears, indignation, a quiet, firm refusal or the blossoming forth of passion which might be more embarrassing still than any of these. And then I had put the tips of my fingers to Amity Nance's temples and let them move into a clear, open forehead and down over deep cheek-bones and bridges of the straight nose to a friendly, thin-lipped mouth, one without tautness, without any development of muscle about it, and to a chin smoothly developed, not in the least hard, yet giving squareness rather than ovalness to the whole face. It was a face that I liked. Nohing was too deeply bitten into it, neither pain nor effort. I approved of it. And then, as imperceptibly as I might and fearful lest she might take it for a caress, I had let my fingers slip down over throat and shoulders and the tips just barely pass her breasts to know what depth and heaviness of a woman she was.

It was not a caress. There was no hint of sexual exploration in it. I was attempting simply to receive the impression of a person whom it was imperative that I should know. And the movement had been taken as it was intended, naturally, as if sitting still to have a photograph taken, a necessity as between people who could not see each other.

Whatever other harm she might have done to her pupil Miss Brophy had evidently not kept on telling her:

"Beware of wicked men."

Or at any rate if she had Amity had not listened to her.

But I think the contact must have stirred up something in her all the same.

She opened her mouth and spoke.

I wish it were possible to reproduce the effect of her voice.

Evidently she had learnt to speak by feeling the movements of other people's and especially of Miss Brophy's lips and tongue, but she had never heard words spoken. When she herself spoke she had no means of knowing what it sounded like. She could only form her lips and tongue into the shapes that she had learnt and then speak out into a void and ask Miss Brophy to correct her.

The result as I heard it now was extraordinary:

It was a speech more foreign than that of any foreigner speaking the unfamiliar tongue. It had not even the natural focus of a voice. It was curiously ventriloquial, coming as if not from Amity Nance's mouth at all. It was loud, and it was toneless, brutish. And yet there was the vibration of humanity in it. The words were nothing.

She said, as she had said with her fingers on our first meeting:

"You are as I am, blind."

But the words came out of such a depth of unconsciousness, a wild, animal cry resounding from the infinite past or a god speaking brutishly through a woman.

I trembled, and I dare say I wanted to cry.

For the first time that night I went on thinking about Amity Nance after I had left her. Her voice kept breaking tonelessly, monstrously into my sleep.

Could it be that this child of thirty excited me? I would not allow myself so much as the supposition. After waking and dozing with the sound of her voice in my ears time and again until three o'clock in the morning, the rain dripping incessantly outside my window, I got up and went back to Sophie's room and stayed there and presently slept. . . .

June 2-3. The first occasion on which I might consciously have wished Sophie Madron to be other or elsewhere than she was.

I remember this occasion very well. It was I suppose in essence a mere, self-correcting disease of proximity such as must be almost chronic in the lives of married people. I withdrew myself and for the first time contemplated Sophie objectively. It did not matter that I found her beautiful, as I most certainly and heart-breakingly did. She had just that slenderness and tautness of body which can never settle into banality. Every inch of her lived with its own life because she had a natural, voluptuous pleasure in the most insignificant movement of her own limbs. In the very lowest estimate she must always be a piece of mobile, living sculpture of which a man could never tire. But all that mattered in that moment was that I became terribly clear-headed and critical, and sudden clear-headedness I have always found to be the outward and perceptible sign of confused emotions, of emotions that have suddenly made contact and engaged in battle down in the subterranean places.

I began to watch Sophie for signs that she was not so perfect in herself as she ought to have been.

At heart I believe I wanted her to awake and say something utterly stupid in order that I might quarrel with her mind.

I waited for her to open her mouth and snore. And if she had snored I should have wanted to strangle her.

She had a life apart from me. I wanted to come into her closer, to destroy the last atom of separateness. And I knew what that meant. It meant that in a moment I should be wanting to strike her, to make her cry out and gape at me with pain, because there is no other way.

I lay beside her and felt that I should suffocate, so that I might have the excuse to clutch, to tear.

And then I turned my thoughts away from her, as if that were the most insidious cruelty of all.

I thought of Amity:

"Amity Nance has no past, and therefore her life is without separateness. It is not in her power to make another person lonely. Her life is continuous from the day of her birth until a day far beyond to-morrow. Thirty years have gone by in a continuous effort to know the world about her, and there has been no break of any kind, no sudden weariness or sense of loss to clot the flow of her emotion as blood clots. Her life is continuous, and her innocence is absolute. She has no past. Her life has never doubled back upon itself or fled away round irretraceable corners like a fugitive thief wandering perpetually about his mother's house where he knows the police are waiting for him. And her life has never been anything but trustful, has never broken faith. From the first moment she had to trust other people not to lead her astray, trust the earth she could not see to sustain her feet. And her innocence is absolute because she has never known anxiety or fear and never turned her back on whatever presented itself to her. She has grown patiently and humbly towards the present moment, and it is with flawless patience and humility that she will suffer whatever is to follow.

I thought thus of Amity Nance and in the same instant turned to Sophie Madron, sleeping quietly and without a doubt happily beside me. I put my mouth to the loved, high ridge of her cheek where the night air lay cool and the strong hair coiled at my lip. I wanted to rouse her, but did not. I let my hands outside the bed-clothes flow down the length of her to the feet which lay together like hands clasped in surprise or wrung with anguish, and then I got up and went away to my own room.

June 8. What a reasonable neurologist would diagnose as emotional fatigue, a theologian as *accidia* and a French novelist as *une crise de nerfs*. Myself I called it stalemate.

All morning I played the piano. I played myself dizzy, and I played viciously, trying to make music that would keep everybody else out of the music-room. I was in terror lest Mrs. Nance should come to sit in the room listening to me, and I played to keep her away. I had not wanted to give her the massage this morning. I had cultivated fantasies, fancying that perhaps Sophie would come to me in the kind of purity of mind with which she had wrapped herself to go into retreat at Chy Tralee and beg me not to put my hands in any way to anybody else's body, to bandage them up, not even to play the piano or feel the banister rail as I came downstairs, and that this would give me an excuse. But Sophie had failed me too. I played the piano. At any rate I would not talk to Amity this morning. I played without stopping. I thought that if I stopped Mrs. Nance might come and tell me that Amity was tired of reading and evidently wanted me to talk to her. I thought that Sophie might come and demand an explanation, though what she might need an explanation of I could not have said. I played the piano till the notes seemed to lose all resonance and sounded back on my ears with the dead, wooden sound of a xylophone that has been stored in a damp room.

The weather was coming right again. The sun was fitful yet, every now and then sunk in cloud, but it was persistent, and soon it would come out riotously hot. I would have preferred it cold.

In fact there was only one way of spending that day without wretchedness, and it was a way not possible three hundred miles from London. In London I should have spent the morning in bed, slowly risen, bathed and drunk tea at midday. By four o'clock I should have been dressed and have gone off to put myself in the hands of an experienced barber. He would have cut my hair, shampooed me with lovely, rubber vibration to enervate and then make tingle the scalp. He would have shaved me, steamed my face with hot towels and powdered me. I should then have gone out and lingered for three hours over a very good meal with the wines appropriate to every dish, after which I should have betaken myself to a Turkish bath and slept there until seven o'clock the following morning when I should have been ready for life again. That would have been the only harmless way of spending the day, and away down here at Rose Gwavas it was totally out of my reach.

So I played the piano till lunch.

After lunch I felt more in order, but I wasn't. I went up to Sophie's room, and we played a game which a man can only play when he is in a particular condition. It is necessary for him to have had his nervous sensibilities dulled, but he must not himself have lost all appetite. The game is played fully clothed. It usually begins in an easy chair, on the sofa or on the edge of a bed. The man preferably smokes a cigarette and pretends to be not in the least interested, while the poor, wretched girl scarcely knows what to do, but thinks the game might be fun once in a while and will take an occasional puff at the man's cigarette to show that she enters into the spirit of the thing. When the cigarette is burnt out, the game becomes steadily more strenuous. At last, after the two people have wrestled with each other through a great variety of uncomfortable positions which it would be painful to describe, the game usually ends up on the carpet by the door, the two people hot, exhausted and unhappy, and the man more likely than not only waiting for the moment at which he will not be thought impolite if he goes away to the bathroom to be sick.

June 9. Continuation of the same mood and . . . the adder.

I have the most vivid memory of stopping dead half-way upstairs and moving my hand up and down the banister rail to convince myself definitely that it was not sticky. I had been thinking of the house in which a young, artist friend of mine at one time lived. When I visited him I never worried much about the smells, but the stickiness of the banister rail, where the children on other floors had left traces of jam, were a constant source of horror to me. It was associated for me with the last stages of every kind of squalor and humiliation, not to mention silver-fish in the lavatory.

"From the sense of touch," I thought, "there is no escape. If an ordinary man lives in ugly, noisy or stinking places he can shut his eyes, plug his ears and put eau-de-Cologne upon his handkerchief, but there is no escape for the sense of touch. In addition to which, to finger anything, especially a living thing, affects the object. There is truly such a thing as the innocent eye. There is no innocent touch. . . ."

DJUNA BARNES

Nightwood

Few people have had more experience with Bohemia or more right to interpret it than Djuna Barnes. An original member of the Theatre Guild, when it was the home of innovation, and an associate of the plucky *Little Review,* which sought to reveal a new culture to America, Miss Barnes was a playwright of originality and power. Her career in prose began with a chapbook, *The Book of Repulsive Women,* printed in a Greenwich Village garret. Djuna Barnes wrote for the *avant-garde* magazines of Europe and her *Nightwood* (1936) deals with five Parisian eccentrics. Its publication rocked the literary world: here was the heir of Elizabethan tragedy, a rival of Joyce in verbal resources, the possessor of a style which expressed horror and the certainty of destruction in a precise and serried prose saturated with poetry. Miss Barnes's wit is a thing apart: it does not amuse so much as it points up the grin of the skeleton. Corruption is the matter of the book, but art is its nature. In our selection, the portrait of the harpy dominates. The creatures battening on income, who are the succubi of youth and enthusiasm, have never been more terrifyingly rendered. The following chapter is virtually a self-contained story.

JENNY PETHERBRIDGE was a widow, a middle-aged woman who had been married four times. Each husband had wasted away and died; she had been like a squirrel racing a wheel day and night in an endeavour to make them historical; they could not survive it.

She had a beaked head and the body, small, feeble, and ferocious, that somehow made one associate her with Judy; they did not go together. Only severed could any part of her have been called "right." There was a trembling ardour in her wrists and fingers as if she were suffering from some elaborate denial. She looked old, yet expectant of age; she seemed to be steaming in the vapours of someone else about to die; still she gave off an odour to the mind (for there are purely mental smells that have no reality) of a woman about to be *accouchée.* Her body suffered from its fare, laughter and crumbs, abuse and indulgence. But put out a hand to touch her, and her head moved perceptibly with the broken arc of two instincts, recoil and advance, so that the head rocked timidly and aggressively at the same moment, giving her a slightly shuddering and expectant rhythm.

She writhed under the necessity of being unable to wear anything becoming, being one of those panicky little women who, no matter what they put on, look like a child under penance.

She had a fancy for tiny ivory or jade elephants; she said they were luck; she left a trail of tiny elephants wherever she went; and she went hurriedly and gasping.

Her walls, her cupboards, her bureaux, were teeming with second-hand dealings with life. It takes a bold and authentic robber to get first-hand plunder. Someone else's marriage ring was on her finger; the photograph taken of Robin for Nora sat upon her table. The books in her library were other people's selections. She lived among her own things like a visitor to a room kept "exactly as it was when—" She tip-toed, even when she went to draw a bath, nervous and *andante*. She stopped, fluttering and febrile, before every object in her house. She had no sense of humour or peace or rest, and her own quivering uncertainty made even the objects which she pointed out to the company, as, "My virgin from Palma," or, "The left-hand glove of La Duse," recede into a distance of uncertainty, so that it was almost impossible for the onlooker to see them at all. When anyone was witty about a contemporary event, she would look perplexed and a little dismayed, as if someone had done something that really should not have been done; therefore her attention had been narrowed down to listening for *faux pas*. She frequently talked about something being the "death of her," and certainly anything could have been had she been the first to suffer it. The words that fell from her mouth seemed to have been lent to her; had she been forced to invent a vocabulary for herself, it would have been a vocabulary of two words, "ah" and "oh." Hovering, trembling, tip-toeing, she would unwind anecdote after anecdote in a light rapid lisping voice which one always expected to change, to drop and to become the "every day" voice; but it never did. The stories were humorous, well told. She would smile, toss her hands up, widen her eyes; immediately everyone in the room had a certain feeling of something lost, sensing that there was one person who was missing the importance of the moment, who had not heard the story; the teller herself.

She had endless cuttings and scraps from journals and old theatre programmes, haunted the *Comédie Française,* spoke of Molière, Racine and *La Dame aux Camélias*. She was generous with money. She made gifts lavishly and spontaneously. She was the worst recipient of presents in the world. She sent bushel baskets of camellias to actresses because she had a passion for the characters they portrayed. The flowers were tied with yards of satin ribbon, and a note accompanied them, effusive and gentle. To men she sent books by the dozen; the general feeling was that she was a well-read woman, though she had read perhaps ten books in her life.

She had a continual rapacity for other people's facts; absorbing time, she held herself responsible for historic characters. She was avid and disorderly in her heart. She defiled the very meaning of personality in her passion to be a person; somewhere about her was the tension of the accident that made the beast the human endeavour.

She was nervous about the future; it made her indelicate. She was one of the most unimportantly wicked women of her time—because she could not let her time alone, and yet could never be a part of it. She wanted to be the reason for everything and so was the cause of nothing. She had the fluency of tongue and action meted out by divine providence to those who cannot think for themselves. She was master of the over-sweet phrase, the over-tight embrace.

One inevitably thought of her in the act of love emitting florid *commedia dell' arte* ejaculations; one should not have thought of her in the act of love at all. She thought of little else, and though always submitting to the act, spoke of and desired the spirit of love; yet was unable to attain it.

No one could intrude upon her because there was no place for intrusion. This inadequacy made her insubordinate—she could not participate in a great love, she could only report it. Since her emotional reactions were without distinction, she had to fall back on the emotions of the past, great loves already lived and related, and over those she seemed to suffer and grow glad.

When she fell in love it was with a perfect fury of accumulated dishonesty; she became instantly a dealer in second-hand and therefore incalculable emotions. As, from the solid archives of usage, she had stolen or appropriated the dignity of speech, so she appropriated the most passionate love that she knew, Nora's for Robin. She was a "squatter" by instinct.

Jenny knew about Nora immediately; to know Robin ten minutes was to know about Nora. Robin spoke of her in long, rambling, impassioned sentences. It had caught Jenny by the ear—she listened, and both loves seemed to be one and her own. From that moment the catastrophe was inevitable. This was in nineteen hundred and twenty-seven.

At their subsequent engagements, Jenny was always early and Robin late. Perhaps at the *Ambassadeurs* (Jenny feared meeting Nora). Perhaps dinner in the *Bois*—Jenny had the collective income four dead husbands could afford—Robin would walk in, with the aggressive slide to the foot common to tall people, slurred in its accent by the hipless smoothness of her gait—her hands in her pockets, the trench coat with the belt hanging, scowling and reluctant. Jenny leaning far over the table, Robin far back, her legs thrust under her, to balance the whole backward incline of the body, and Jenny so far forward that she had to catch her small legs in the back rung of the chair, ankle out and toe in, not to pitch forward on the table—thus they presented the two halves of a movement that had, as in sculpture, the beauty and the absurdity of a desire that is in flower but that can have no burgeoning, unable to execute its destiny; a movement that can divulge neither caution nor daring, for the fundamental condition for completion was in neither of them; they were like Greek runners, with lifted feet but without the relief of the final command that would bring the foot down—eternally angry, eternally separated, in a cataleptic frozen gesture of abandon.

The meeting at the opera had not been the first, but Jenny, seeing the doctor in the *promenoir,* aware of his passion for gossip, knew she had better make it seem so; as a matter of fact she had met Robin a year previously.

Though Jenny knew her safety lay in secrecy, she could not bear her safety; she wanted to be powerful enough to dare the world—and knowing she was not, the knowledge added to that already great burden of trembling timidity and fury.

On arriving at her house with the doctor and Robin, Jenny found several actresses awaiting her, two gentlemen, and the Marchesa de Spada, a very old rheumatic woman (with an antique spaniel, which suffered from asthma), who believed in the stars. There was talk about fate, and every hand in the room was searched and every destiny turned over and discussed. A little girl (Jenny called her niece, though she was no relation) sat at the far end of the room. She had been playing, but the moment Robin entered she ceased and sat, her two small wax-like hands tender with the new life in them cupped up in her lap, staring under her long-lashed eyelids at no one else, as if she had become prematurely aware. This was the child Jenny spoke of later when she called on Felix.

The Marchesa remarked that everyone in the room had been going on from interminable sources since the world began and would continue to reappear, but that there was one person who had come to the end of her existence and would return no more. As she spoke she looked slyly at Robin, who was standing by the piano speaking to the child in an undertone; and at the Marchesa's words Jenny began to tremble slightly, so that every point of her upstanding hair—it stood about her head in a bush, virile and unlovely—quivered. She began to pull herself along the enormous sofa towards the Marchesa, her legs under her, and suddenly she stood up.

"Order the carriages!" she cried. "Immediately! We will go driving; we need a little air!" She turned her back and spoke in agitation. "Yes, yes," she said, "the carriages! It is so close in here!"

"What carriages?" said the doctor, and he looked from one to the other. "What carriages?" He could hear the maid unlocking the front door, calling out to the coachmen. He could hear the clear ringing sound of wheels drawn close to the curb and the muttered cries of a foreign voice. Robin turned around and said, a malign gentle smile on her mouth, "Now she is in a panic, and we will have to do something." She put her glass down and stood, her back to the room, her broad shoulders drawn up, and though she was drunk, there was a withdrawal in her movement and a wish to be gone.

"She will dress up now," she said. She leaned back against the piano, pointing with the hand that held her glass. "Dress up; wait, you will see." Then she added, thrusting her chin forward so that the cords in her neck stood out: "Dress up in something old."

The doctor, who was more uncomfortable perhaps than anyone in the room and yet who could not forbear scandal, in order to gossip about the "manifestations of our time" at a later date, made a slight gesture and said, "Hush!" And sure enough, at that moment, Jenny appeared in the doorway to the bedroom, got up in a hoop, a bonnet and a shawl, and stood looking at Robin who was paying no attention to her, deep in conversation with the child. Jenny with the burning interest of a person who is led to believe herself a part of the harmony of a concert to which she is listening, appropriating in some measure its identity, emitted short exclamatory ejaculations.

There were, it turned out, three carriages in all, those open hacks that may still be had in Paris if they are hunted up in time. Jenny had a standing order with them, and when they were not called upon still they circled about her address, like flies about a bowl of cream. The three cabbies were hunched up on their boxes, their coats about their ears, for though it was an early autumn night, it had become very chilly by twelve o'clock. They had been ordered for eleven and had been sitting on their boxes for the past hour.

Jenny, cold with dread lest Robin should get into one of the other carriages with a tall slightly surprised English girl, seated herself in the farthest corner of the foremost *fiacre* and called, "Here, here," leaving the rest of the guests to dispose of themselves. The child, Sylvia, sat across from her, the ragged gray rug held in two clenched hands. There was a great deal of chattering and laughter when to her horror

Jenny saw that Robin was moving toward the second carriage in which the English girl had already seated herself. "Ah, no, no!" Jennie cried, and began beating the upholstery, sending up a cloud of dust. "Come here," she said in an anguished voice, as if it were the end of her life. "Come here with me, both of you," she added in a lowered and choking tone; and assisted by the doctor, Robin got in, the young Englishwoman, to Jenny's consternation, taking the seat by her side.

Doctor O'Connor now turned to the driver and called out: *"Ecoute, mon gosse, va comme si trente-six diables étaient accrochés à tes fesses!"* Then waving his hand in a gesture of abandon, he added: "Where to but the woods, the sweet woods of Paris! *Fais le tour du Bois!"* he shouted, and slowly the three carriages, horse behind horse, moved out into the *Champs Elysées.*

Jenny, with nothing to protect her against the night but her long Spanish shawl, which looked ridiculous over her flimsy hoop and bodice, a rug over her knees, had sunk back with collapsed shoulders. With darting, incredible swiftness, her eyes went from one girl to the other, while the doctor, wondering how he had managed to get himself into the carriage which held three women and a child, listened to the faint laughter from the carriages behind, feeling, as he listened, a twinge of occult misery. "Ah!" he said under his breath. "Just the girl that God forgot." Saying which, he seemed to be precipitated into the halls of justice, where he had suffered twenty-four hours. "Oh, God help us," he said, speaking aloud, at which the child turned slightly on her seat, her head, with large intelligent eyes directed toward him, which, had he noticed, would have silenced him instantly (for the doctor had a mother's reverence for childhood). "What manner of man is it that has to adopt his brother's children to make a mother of himself, and sleeps with his brother's wife to get him a future—it's enough to bring down the black curse of Kerry."

"What?" said Jenny in a loud voice, hoping to effect a break in the whispered conversation between Robin and the English girl. The doctor turned up his coat collar.

"I was saying, madame, that by his own peculiar perversity God has made me a liar—"

"What, what is that you say?" demanded Jenny, her eyes still fixed on Robin so that her question seemed to be directed rather to that corner of the carriage than to the doctor.

"You see before you, madame," he said, "one who was created in anxiety. My father, Lord rest his soul, had no happiness of me from the beginning. When I joined the army he relented a little because he had a suspicion that possibly in that fracas which occasionally puts a son on the list of 'not much left since,' I might be damaged. After all, he had no desire to see my ways corrected with a round of buckshot. He came in to me early in the dawn as I lay in my bed to say that he forgave me and that indeed he hoped to be forgiven; that he had never understood, but that he had, by much thought, by heavy reading, come back with love in his hand, that he was sorry, that he came to say so, that he hoped I could conduct myself like a soldier. For a moment he seemed to realize my terrible predicament: to be shot for man's meat, but to go down like a girl, crying in the night for her mother. So I got up in bed on my knees and crawled to the foot where he stood, and cast my arms about him and said, 'No matter what you have done or thought, you were right, and there's nothing in my heart but love for you and respect.' "

Jenny had shrunk into her rug and was not listening. Her eyes followed every movement of Robin's hand, which was laid now on the child's hand, now stroking her hair, the child smiling up into the trees.

"Oh," said the doctor, "for the love of God!"

Jenny began to cry slowly, the tears wet, warm, and sudden in the odd misery of her face. It made the doctor sad, with that unhappy yet pleasantly regrettable discomfort on which he usually launched his better meditations.

He remarked, and why he did not know, that by weeping she appeared like a single personality who, by multiplying her tears, brought herself into the position of one who is seen twenty times in twenty mirrors—still only one, but many times distressed. Jenny began to weep outright. As the initial soft weeping had not caught Robin's attention, now Jenny used the increase and the catching in her throat to attract her, with the same insistent fury one feels when trying to attract a person in a crowded room. The weeping became as accurate as the monotonous underplay in a score, in spite of the incapacity of her heart. The doctor, sitting now a little slumped forward, said in an almost professional voice (they were now long past the pond and the park and were circling back again toward the lower parts of town), "Love of woman for woman, what insane passion for unmitigated anguish and motherhood brought that into the mind?"

"Oh, oh," she said, "look at her!" She abruptly made a gesture toward Robin and the girl, as if they were no longer present, as if they were a vista passing out of view with the movement of the horses. "Look, she brings love down to a level!" She hoped that Robin would hear.

"Ah!" he said. "Love, that terrible thing!"

She began to beat the cushions with her doubled fist. "What could you know about it? Men never know anything about it, why should they? But a woman should know—they are finer, more sacred; my love is sacred and my love is great!"

"Shut up," Robin said, putting her hand on her knee. "Shut up, you don't know what you are talking about. You talk all the time and you never know anything. It's such an awful weakness with you. Identifying yourself with God!" She was smiling, and the English girl, breathing very quickly, lit a cigarette. The child remained speechless, as she had been for the duration of the drive, her head turned as if fixed, looking at Robin and trying to hold her slight legs, that did not reach the floor, from shaking with the shaking of the carriage.

Then Jenny struck Robin, scratching and tearing in hysteria, striking, clutching and crying. Slowly the blood began to run down Robin's cheeks, and as Jenny struck repeatedly Robin began to go forward as if brought to the movement by the very blows themselves, as if she had no will, sinking down in the small carriage, her knees on the floor, her head forward as her arm moved upward in a gesture of defence; and as she sank, Jenny also, as if compelled to conclude the movement of the first blow, almost as something seen in retarded action, leaned forward and over, so that when the whole of the gesture was completed, Robin's hands were covered by Jenny's slight and bending breast, caught in between the bosom and the knees. And suddenly the child flung herself down on the seat, face outward, and said in a voice not suitable for a child because it was controlled with terror: "Let me go! Let me go! Let me go!"

The carriage at this moment drew smartly up into the *rue du Cherche-Midi*. Robin jumped before the carriage stopped, but Jenny was close behind her, following her as far as the garden.

It was not long after this that Nora and Robin separated; a little later Jenny and Robin sailed for America.

NOTE ON WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "ABSALOM, ABSALOM!"

The story—or rather, what she thinks is the story—is told by Rosa Coldfield, a sixty-three year old woman of the deep South.

The scene is Jefferson, Mississippi, where a stranger, Thomas Sutpen, arrived in 1833 with a French architect and Negroes to clear a plantation. Thomas married Ellen Coldfield, and they had two children, Judith and Henry. The children's companion was Clytie, an illegitimate Mulatto child of their father's.

Henry Sutpen meets Charles Bon at the University and brings him home. Charles and Judith attract each other, and become engaged. But Judith's father forbids their marriage. At this time Rosa Coldfield, the narrator, is fourteen.

Henry Sutpen leaves with his friend Charles. Arrived in New Orleans, Charles introduces Henry to his morganatic wife, an octoroon. Henry angers, seeing that Charles meant to make Judith second in a harem.

At the close of the Civil War, outside the plantation ("Sutpen's Hundred"), Henry murders Charles and goes into hiding. Rosa hears the news from a squatter, Wash Jones, and hastens to the plantation. There her dying sister Ellen begs Rosa to adopt Judith, even though Judith is four years her senior (Rosa is twenty-seven years younger than Ellen).

Thomas Sutpen, now fifty-nine, returns from the war and becomes engaged to Rosa, twenty. Two months later he insults her with words that turn her into an implacable railing spinster for her remaining forty-three years. He suggests that since he needs a son, they try first and then marry if a son is born. She is deeply shocked, for in the two months of his courting, Rosa, who thought him a demon, came to see something brave and even grand in what she had once regarded as his madness.

There are many revelations of strange relationships and rancors before this intricate novel ends, but these notes make our selection clear.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

Absalom, Absalom!

AFTER volunteering in World War I, William Faulkner returned to his native Mississippi and, with rare exceptions, there he stays. Encouraged by Sherwood Anderson, he wrote for the *avant-garde* "Double-Dealer" in 1922, but many years elapsed before he produced *The Sound and the Fury;* and it was *Sanctuary* (1931) that made him celebrated in the United States and Europe as well. Faulkner is a farmer, closely observant of his neighbors, saturated in their legends, a keen recorder of their speech. Vice, degeneracy, sadism, the errant, the macabre, the grotesque—these are his subjects; and they flash by way of melodrama, in a highly wrought, sinuous prose. They cut across narrative patterns which are held firm only in the first part of his *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). The effect is that of a witches' sabbath seen by a relentless but astigmatic eye. Born in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1897, Faulkner has ripped off the conventional coverings of whole aspects of American life. He rarely writes of health and he has neither social analysis nor therapy; but he is a writer of unique vision. In the following excerpt, Rosa Coldfield chants her strange recollections of what might be termed love.

AND how could I? turned twenty true enough yet still a child, still living in that womb-like corridor where the world came not even as living echo but as dead incomprehensible shadow, where with the quiet and unalarmed amazement of a child I watched the miragy antics of men and women—my father, my sister, Thomas Sutpen, Judith, Henry, Charles Bon—called honor, principle, marriage, love, bereavement, death; the child who watching him was not a child but one of that triumvirate mother-woman which we three, Judith, Clytie and I, made, which fed and clothed and warmed the static shell and so gave vent and scope to the fierce vain illusion and so said, "At last my life is worth something, even though it only shields and guards the antic fury of an insane child." And then one afternoon (I was in the garden with a hoe, where the path came up from the stable lot) I looked up and saw him looking at me. He had seen me for twenty *years, but now he was looking at me; he stood there in the path looking at me, in the middle of the afternoon. That was it: that it should have been in the middle of the afternoon, when he should not have been anywhere near the house at all but miles away and invisible somewhere among his hundred square miles which they had not troubled to begin to take away from him yet, perhaps not even at this point or at that point but diffused (not attenuated to thinness but enlarged, magnified, encompassing as though in a prolonged and unbroken instant of tremendous effort embracing and holding intact that ten-mile square while he faced from the brink of disaster, invincible and unafraid, what he must have known would be the final defeat) but instead of that standing there in the path looking at me with something curious and strange in his face as if the barnlot, the path at the instant when he came in sight of me had been a swamp out of which he had emerged without having been forewarned that he was about to enter light, and then went on—the face, the same face: it was not love; I do not say that, not gentleness or pity: just a sudden over-burst of light, illumination, who had been told that his son had done murder and vanished and said "Ah.—Well, Clytie." He went on to the house. But it was not love: I do not claim that; I hold no brief for myself, I do not excuse it. I could have said that he had needed, used me; why should I rebel now, because he would use me more? but I did not say it; I could say this time, I do not know, and I would tell the truth. Because I do not know. He was gone; I did not even know that either since there is a metabolism of the spirit as well as of the entrails, in which the stored accumulations of long time burn, generate, create and break some maidenhead of the ravening meat; ay, in a second's time—yes, lost all the shibboleth erupting of cannot, will not, never will in one red instant's fierce obliteration. This was my instant, who could have fled then and did not, who found that he had gone on and did not remember when he had walked away, who found my okra bed finished without remembering the completing of it, who sat at the supper table that night with the familiar dream-cloudy shell which we had grown used to (he did not look at me again during the meal; I might have said then, To what deluded sewer-gush of dreaming does the incorrigible flesh betray us: but I did not) and then before the fire in Judith's bedroom sat as we always did until he came in the door and looked at us and said, "Judith, you and Clytie—" and ceased, still entering, then said, "No, never mind. Rosa will not mind if you both hear it too, since we are short for time and busy with what we have of it" and came and stopped and put his hand on my head and (I do not know what he looked at while he spoke, save* *that by the sound of his voice it was not at us nor at anything in that room) said, "You may think I made your sister Ellen no very good husband. You probably do think so. But even if you will not discount the fact that I am older now, I believe I can promise that I shall do no worse at least for you."*

That was my courtship. That minute's exchanged look in a kitchen garden, that hand upon my head in his daughter's bedroom; a ukase, a decree, a serene and florid boast like a sentence (ay, and delivered in the same attitude) not to be spoken and heard but to be read carved in the bland stone which pediments a forgotten and nameless effigy. I do not excuse it. I claim no brief, no pity, who did not answer "I will" not because I was not asked, because there was no place, no niche, no interval for reply. Because I could have made one. I could have forced that niche myself if I had willed to—a niche not shaped to fit mild "Yes" but some blind desperate female weapon's frenzied slash whose very gaping wound had cried "No! No!" and "Help!" and "Save me!" No, no brief, no pity, who did not even move, who sat beneath that hard oblivious childhood ogre's hand and heard him speak to Judith now, heard Judith's feet, saw Judith's hand, not Judith—that palm in which I read as from a printed chronicle the orphaning, the hardship, the bereave of love; the four hard barren years of scoriating loom, of axe and hoe and all the other tools decreed for men to use: and upon it lying the ring which he gave Ellen in the church almost thirty years ago. Yes, analogy and paradox and madness too. I sat there and felt, not watched, him slip the ring onto my finger in my turn (he was sitting now also, in the chair which we called Clytie's while she stood just beyond the firelight's range beside the chimney) and listened to his voice as Ellen must have listened in her own spirit's April thirty years ago: he talking not about me or love or marriage, not even about himself and to no sane mortal listening nor out of any sanity, but to the very dark forces of fate which he had evoked and dared, out of that wild braggart dream where an intact Sutpen's Hundred which no more had actual being now (and would never have again) than it had when Ellen first heard it, as though in the restoration of that ring to a living finger he had turned all time back twenty years and stopped it, froze it. Yes. I sat there and listened to his voice and told myself, "Why, he is mad. He will decree this marriage for tonight and perform his own ceremony, himself both groom and minister; pronounce his own wild benediction on it with the very bedward candle in his hand: and I mad too, for I will acquiesce, succumb; abet him and plunge down." No, I hold no brief, ask no pity. If I was saved that night (and I was saved; mine was to be some later, colder sacrifice when we—I—should *be free of all excuse of the surprised importunate traitorous flesh) it was no fault, no doing of my own but rather because, once he had restored the ring, he ceased to look at me save as he had looked for the twenty years before that afternoon, as if he had reached for the moment some interval of sanity such as the mad know, just as the sane have intervals of madness to keep them aware that they are sane. It was more than that even. For three months now he had seen me daily though he had not looked at me since I merely made one of that triumvirate who received his gruff unspoken man's gratitude for the spartan ease we supplied, not to his comfort perhaps but at least to the mad dream he lived in. But for the next two months he did not even see me. Perhaps the reason was the obvious one: he was too busy; that having accomplished his engagement (granted that was what he wanted) he did not need to see me. Certainly he did not: there was not even any date set for the wedding. It was almost as though that very afternoon did not exist, had never happened. I might not have even been there in the house. Worse: I could have gone, returned home, and he would not have missed me. I was (whatever it was he wanted of me—not my being, my presence: just my existence, whatever it was that Rosa Coldfield or any young female no blood kin to him represented in whatever it was he wanted—because I will do him this credit: he had never once thought about what he asked me to do until the moment he asked it because I know that he would not have waited two months or even two days to ask it)—my presence was to him only the absence of black morass and snarled vine and creeper to that man who had struggled through a swamp with nothing to guide or drive him—no hope, no light: only some incorrigibility of undefeat—and blundered at last and without warning onto dry solid ground and sun and air—if there could have been such thing as sun to him, if anyone or anything could have competed with the white glare of his madness. Yes, mad, yet not so mad. Because there is a practicality to viciousness: the thief, the liar, the murderer even, has faster rules than virtue ever has; why not madness too? If he was mad, it was only his compelling dream which was insane and not his methods: it was no madman who bargained and cajoled hard manual labor out of men like Jones; it was no madman who kept clear of the sheets and hoods and night-galloping horses with which men who were once his acquaintances even if not his friends discharged the canker suppuration of defeat; it was no madman's plan or tactics which gained him at the lowest possible price the sole woman available to wive him, and by the one device which could have gained his point—not madman, no: since surely there is* *something in madness, even the demoniac, which Satan flees, aghast at his own handiwork, and which God looks on in pity—some spark, some crumb to leaven and redeem that articulated flesh, that speech sight hearing taste and being which we call human man. But no matter. I will tell you what he did and let you be the judge. (Or try to tell you, because there are some things for which three words are three too many, and three thousand words that many words too less, and this is one of them. It can be told; I could take that many sentences, repeat the bold blank naked and outrageous words just as he spoke them, and bequeath you only that same aghast and outraged unbelief I knew when I comprehended what he meant; or take three thousand sentences and leave you only that Why? Why? and Why? that I have asked and listened to for almost fifty years.) But I will let you be the judge and let you tell me if I was not right.*

You see, I was that sun, or thought I was who did believe there was that spark, that crumb in madness which is divine, though madness know no word itself for terror or for pity. There was an ogre of my childhood which before my birth removed my only sister to its grim ogre-bourne and produced two half phantom children whom I was not encouraged, and did not desire, to associate with as if my late-born solitude had taught me presentiment of that fateful intertwining, warned me of that fatal snarly climax before I knew the name for murder—and I forgave it; there was a shape which rode away beneath a flag and (demon or no) courageously suffered—and I did more than just forgive: I slew it, because the body, the blood, the memory which that ogre had dwelt in returned five years later and held out its hand and said "Come" as you might say it to a dog, and I came. Yes, the body, the face, with the right name and memory, even the correct remembering of what and whom (except myself: and was that not but further proof?) it had left behind and returned to: but not the ogre; villain true enough, but a mortal fallible one less to invoke fear than pity: but no ogre; mad true enough, but I told myself, Why should not madness be its own victim also? or, Why may it be not even madness but solitary despair in titan conflict with the lonely and foredoomed and indomitable iron spirit: but no ogre, because it was dead, vanished, consumed somewhere in flame and sulphur-reek perhaps among the lonely craggy peaks of my childhood's solitary remembering—or forgetting; I was that sun, who believed that he (after that evening in Judith's room) was not oblivious of me but only unconscious and receptive like the swamp-freed pilgrim feeling earth and tasting sun and light again and aware of neither but only of darkness' and morass' lack—who did believe there was that *magic in unkin blood which we call by the pallid name of love that would be, might be sun for him (though I the youngest, weakest) where Judith and Clytie both would cast no shadow; yes, I the youngest there yet potently without measured and measurable age since I alone of them could say, "O furious mad old man. I hold no substance that will fit your dream but I can give you airy space and scope for your delirium." And then one afternoon—oh there was a fate in it: afternoon and afternoon and afternoon: do you see? the death of hope and love, the death of pride and principle, and then the death of everything save the old outraged and aghast unbelieving which has lasted for forty-three years—he returned to the house and called me, shouting from the back gallery until I came down; oh I told you he had not thought of it until that moment, that prolonged moment which contained the distance between the house and wherever it was he had been standing when he thought of it: and this too coincident: it was the very day on which he knew definitely and at last exactly how much of his hundred square miles he would be able to save and keep and call his own on the day when he would have to die, that no matter what happened to him now, he would at least retain the shell of Sutpen's Hundred even though a better name for it would now be Sutpen's One—called, shouted for me until I came down. He had not even waited to tether his horse; he stood with the reins over his arm (and no hand on my head now) and spoke the bald outrageous words exactly as if he were consulting with Jones or with some other man about a bitch dog or a cow or mare.*

They will have told you how I came back home. Oh yes, I know: "Rosie Coldfield, lose him, weep him; caught a man but couldn't keep him"—Oh yes, I know (and kind too; they would be kind): Rosa Coldfield, warped bitter orphaned country stick called Rosa Coldfield, safely engaged at last and so off the town, the county; they will have told you: How I went out there to live for the rest of my life, seeing in my nephew's murdering an act of God enabling me ostensibly to obey my dying sister's request that I save at least one of the two children which she had doomed by conceiving them but actually to be in the house when he returned who, being a demon, would therefore be impervious to shot and shell and so would return; I waiting for him because I was young still (who had buried no hopes to bugles, beneath a flag) and ripe for marrying in this time and place where most of the young men were dead and all the living ones either old or already married or tired, too tired for love; he my best, my only chance in this: an environment where at best and even lacking war my chances would have been slender enough since I was not only a

Southern gentlewoman but the very modest character of whose background and circumstances must needs be their own affirmation since had I been the daughter of a wealthy planter I could have married almost anyone but being the daughter merely of a small store-keeper I could even afford to accept flowers from almost no one and so would have been doomed to marry at last some casual apprentice-clerk in my father's business—Yes, they will have told you: who was young and had buried hopes only during that night which was four years long when beside a shuttered and unsleeping candle she embalmed the War and its heritage of suffering and injustice and sorrow on the backsides of the pages within an old account book, embalming blotting from the breathable air the poisonous secret effluvium of lusting and hating and killing—they will have told you: daughter of an embusque who had to turn to a demon, a villain: and therefore she had been right in hating her father since if he had not died in that attic she would not have had to go out there to find food and protection and shelter and if she had not had to depend on his food and clothing (even if she did help to grow and weave it) to keep her alive and warm, until simple justice demanded that she make what return for it he might require of her commensurate with honor, she would not have become engaged to him and if she had not become engaged to him she would not have had to lie at night asking herself Why and Why and Why as she has done for forty-three years: as if she had been instinctively right even as a child in hating her father and so these forty-three years of impotent and unbearable outrage were the revenge on her of some sophisticated and ironic sterile nature for having hated that which gave her life.—Yes, Rosa Coldfield engaged at last who, lacking the fact that her sister had bequeathed her at least something of shelter and kin, might have become a charge upon the town: and now Rosa Coldfield, lose him, weep him; found a man but failed to keep him; Rosa Coldfield who would be right, only being right is not enough for women, who had rather be wrong than just that; who want the man who was wrong to admit it. And that's what she cant forgive him for: not for the insult, not even for having jilted him: but for being dead. Oh yes, I know, I know: How two months later they learned that she had packed up her belongings (that is, put on the shawl and hat again) and come back to town, to live alone in the house where her parents were dead and gone and where Judith would come now and then and bring her some of what food they had out at Sutpen's Hundred and which only dire necessity, the brute inexplicable flesh's stubborn will to live, brought her (Miss Coldfield) to accept. And it dire indeed: because now the town—farmers passing, *negro servants going to work in white kitchens—would see her before sun-up gathering greens along garden fences, pulling them through the fence since she had no garden of her own, no seed to plant one with, no tools to work it with herself, even if she had known completely how, who had had only the freshman year at gardening and doubtless would not have worked it if she had known; reaching through the garden fence and gathering vegetables though she would have been welcome to enter the garden and get them, and they would have even done the gathering and sent them to her, since there were more people than Judge Benbow who would leave baskets of provisions on her front porch at night. But she would not permit them and would not even use a stick to reach through the fence and draw the vegetables to where she could grasp them, the reach of her unaided arm being the limit of brigandage which she never passed. It was not to keep from being seen stealing that sent her forth before the town was awake, because if she had had a nigger she would have sent him forth in broad daylight to forage, where, she would not have cared, exactly as the cavalry heroes whom she wrote verse about would have sent their men.—Yes, Rosie Coldfield, lose him, weep him; caught a beau but couldn't keep him; (oh yes, they will tell you) found a beau and was insulted, something heard and not forgiven, not so much for the saying of it but for having thought it about her so that when she heard it she realized like thunderclap that it must have been in his mind for a day, a week, even a month maybe, he looking at her daily with that in his mind and she not even knowing it. But I forgave him. They will tell you different, but I did. Why shouldn't I? I had nothing to forgive; I had not lost him because I never owned him: a certain segment of rotten mud walked into my life, spoke that to me which I had never heard before and never shall again, and then walked out; that was all. I never owned him; certainly not in that sewer sense which you would mean by that and maybe think (but you are wrong) I mean. That did not matter. That was not even the nub of the insult. I mean that he was not owned by anyone or anything in this world, had never been, would never be, not even by Ellen, not even by Jones' granddaughter. Because he was not articulated in this world. He was a walking shadow. He was the light-blinded bat-like image of his own torment cast by the fierce demoniac lantern up from beneath the earth's crust and hence in retrograde, reverse; from abysmal and chaotic dark to eternal and abysmal dark completing his descending (do you mark the gradation?) ellipsis, clinging, trying to cling with vain unsubstantial hands to what he hoped would hold him, save him, arrest him —Ellen (do you mark them?), myself, then last of all that fatherless daughter of Wash Jones' only child who, so I heard once, died in a*

Memphis brothel—to find severence (even if not rest and peace) at last in the stroke of a rusty scythe. I was told, informed of that too, though not by Jones this time but by someone else kind enough to turn aside and tell me he was dead. "Dead?" I cried. "Dead? You? You lie; you're not dead; heaven cannot, and hell dare not, have you!" . . .

NOTE ON ROSAMOND LEHMANN'S "DUSTY ANSWER"

Judith Earle and Jennifer Baird meet as students at Cambridge University. They become chums and draw around them a circle in which they loll about, smoke, discuss sex and sociology, and always return to the subject of sex. The intimacy between Judith and Jennifer becomes complete. Other college girls—Geraldine, a former intimate of Jennifer's, Dorothy, and Mabel—are part of their circle.

ROSAMOND LEHMANN

Dusty Answer

The author of *Dusty Answer* (1926), Rosamond Lehmann has continued her brilliant career with five other novels, the most recent of which, *The Ballad and the Source* (1945), has stirred critical controversy in America. This young English writer (born in 1903) is the exponent of youth, and she views maturity as the period when adventure, originality, and passion inevitably subside. Her prose is suffused with poetry, and she delights in distinguishing finely and at length, so as to identify situations wholly. In the following selection, concerned with the interlacing of two women's lives, Miss Lehmann works upon the fringes of a subject on which many have been gross and sensational; in her version, the effect is subtle and total. Few writers are more feminine. Those modes of apprehension, of the ordering of ideas, of the culling of sensations, of the articulation, in which women have come to differ from men, find in Rosamond Lehmann the most polished exponent in English.

THE long days of May stretched out before Judith and Jennifer. Each day was a fresh adventure in the open air, and work an unimportant and neglected nuisance. For weeks the weather remained flawless. Life narrowed to a wandering in a green canoe up small river-channels far from the town, with Jennifer paddling in wild bursts between long periods of inaction. To all Judith's offers of help she answered firmly that a woman should never depart from her type.

They landed finally and made ready to bathe.

"Off, off, you lendings!" cried Jennifer. "Do you know, darling, that comes home to me more than anything else in all Shakespeare? I swear, Judith, it seems much more natural to me to wear no clothes."

She stood up, stretching white arms above her head. Her cloud of hair was vivid in the blue air. Her back was slender and strong and faultlessly moulded.

"Glorious, glorious Pagan that I adore!" whispered the voice in Judith that could never speak out.

Beside Jennifer she felt herself too slim, too flexible, almost attenuated.

"You are so utterly lovely," Jennifer said, watching her.

They swam in cool water in a deep circular pool swept round with willows, and dried themselves in the sun.

They spent the afternoon in the shade of a blossoming may bush. All round them the new green of the fields was matted over with a rich and solid layer of buttercup yellow. Jennifer lay flat on her back with the utter relaxed immobility of an animal, replenishing her vitality through every nerve.

Slowly they opened books, dreamed through a page, forgot it at once, laid books aside; turned to smile at each other, to talk as if there could never be enough of talking; with excitement, with anxiety, as if to-morrow might part them and leave them for ever burdened with the weight of all they had had to tell each other.

Judith crept closer, warming every sense at her, silent and utterly peaceful. She was the part of you which you never had been able to untie and set free, the part that wanted to dance and run and sing, taking strong draughts of wind and sunlight; and was, instead, done up in intricate knots and overcast with shadows; the part that longed to look outward and laugh, accepting life as an easy exciting thing; and yet was checked by a voice that said doubtfully that there were dark ideas behind it all, tangling the web; and turned you inward to grope among the roots of thought and feeling for the threads.

You could not do without Jennifer now.

The sun sank, and the level light flooded the fields and the river. Now the landscape lost its bright pure definitions of outline, its look as of a picture embroidered in brilliant silks, and veiled its colours with a uniform pearl-like glow. A chill fell and the scent of May grew troubling in the stillness. They turned the canoe towards home.

Nearer the town, boats became more frequent. Gramophones clamoured from the bowels of most of them; and they were heavily charged with grey-flannelled youth. Jennifer, observing them with frank interest, pointed out the good-looking ones in a loud whisper; and all of them stared, stared as they passed.

Above the quiet secretly-stirring town, roofs, towers and spires floated in a pale gold wash of light. What was the mystery of Cambridge in the evening? Footfalls struck with a pang on the heart, faces startled with strange beauty, and every far appearing or disappearing form seemed significant.

And when they got back to College, even that solid red-brick barrack was touched with mystery. The corridors were long patterns of unreal light and shadow. Girls' voices sounded remote as in a dream, with a murmuring rise and fall and light laughter behind closed doors. The thrilling smell of cowslips and wall-flowers was everywhere, like a cloud of enchantment.

In Jennifer's room, someone had let down the sun-blind, and all was in throbbing shadow. Her great copper bowl was piled, as usual, with fruit, and they ate of it idly, without hunger.

"Now a little work," said Judith firmly. "Think! only three weeks till Mays. . . ."

But it was impossible to feel moved.

Jennifer, looking childish and despondent, sat down silently by the window with a book.

Judith wrote on a sheet of paper:

Tall oaks branch-charmèd by the earnest stars; and studied it. That *was* a starry night: the sound of the syllables made stars prick out in dark treetops.

Under it she wrote:

. . . the foam
Of perilous seas in faëry lands forlorn.

What a lot there were for the sea and the seashore! . . . The page became fuller.

Upon the desolate verge of light
Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

The unplumbed salt estranging sea.

From the lone sheiling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and a world of seas:
But still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland;
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

Ah, that said it all. . . .

The lines came flocking at random.

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land
Into the frosty starlight, and there flowed
Rejoicing through the hushed Chorasmian waste
Under the solitary moon. . . .

Ah sunflower weary of time
That countest the steps of the sun. . . .

Ah sunflower! . . . Where were they—the old gardens of the sun where my sunflower wished to go? They half unfolded themselves at the words . . .

Nous n'irons plux aux bois
Les lauriers sont coupés.

O mors quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis. . . .

How with one tongue those both cried alas!
And then in the end, sleep and a timeless peace.

Nox est perpetua una dormienda.

There were so many tumbling and leaping about in your head you could go on for ever. . . .

Now to study them. What did it all mean? Was there any thread running through them with which to make a theory? Anybody could write down strings of quotations,—but a student of English literature was expected to deal in theories. It was something to do with the sound . . . the way sound made images, shell within shell of them softly unclosing . . . the way words became colours and scents . . . and the surprise when it happened, the ache of desire, the surge of excitement, the sense of fulfilment, the momentary perception of something unknowable. . . . Some sort of truth, some answer to the question: What is poetry? . . . No it was no good. But it had been very enjoyable, writing things down like that and repeating them to yourself.

Jennifer was half asleep with her head upon the windowsill. The bowl of fruit burned in the dimness. How like Jennifer was her room! Yellow painted chairs, a red and blue rug on the hearth, cowslips in coloured bowls and jars, one branch of white lilac in a tall blue vase; the guitar with its many ribbons lying on the table; a silken Italian shawl, embroidered with great rose and blue and yellow flowers flung over the screen: wherever you looked colour leapt up at you; she threw colour about in profuse disorder and left it. Her hat of pale green straw with its little wreath of clover lay on the floor. Nobody else had attractive childish hats like hers. A wide green straw would remind you of Jennifer to the end of your life; and beneath it you would see the full delicious curve of her cheek and chin, her deep-shadowed eyes, her lips that seemed to hold all life in their ardent lines.

She turned her head and smiled sleepily.

"Hullo!" said Judith. "Haven't we been quiet? I've done such a lot of work."

"I've done none. I couldn't remember the difference between ethics and æsthetics. What rot it all is! . . . Now listen and we'll hear a nightingale. He's tuning up."

They leaned out of the window.

The icy aching flute in the cedar called and called on two or three notes, uncertain, dissatisfied; then all at once found itself and bubbled over in rich and complicated rapture.

Jennifer was listening, tranced in her strange immobility, as if every other sense were suspended to allow her to hear aright.

She roused herself at last as Judith bent to kiss her good night.

"Good night my—darling—darling—" she said.

They stared at each other with tragic faces. It was too much, this happiness and beauty.

The end of the first year. . . .

Judith heard herself say slowly, softly:

"As I told you, there are a great many people here who love her. That makes a difference, doesn't it? People have to love Jennifer." She buried her face in her hands, and thought aloud, in a sort of whisper: "People have to love her and then she seems cruel. But she doesn't mean to be. There's something about her—people don't seem to be able to love her clearly and serenely: they have to love her too much. Everything gets dark and confused and aching, and they want to—touch her and be the only one near her; they want to look after her and give her everything she wants. It's tiring. And then when they're tired she gives them back life. She pours life into them from herself."

She stopped short, seeing in a flash how it had always been between herself and Jennifer. Tired, you had come again and again to her, pressing close to be replenished from her vitality. But Jennifer had not drunk life from you in return: quietness and tenderness and understanding, but not life. And the quietness had passed into sadness—yes, you knew now you had seen it happening sometimes,—sadness, flatness: the virtue had gone out of her in the incessant giving of herself, the incessant taking on of an alien quietness. You had wanted too much, you had worn her out. Perhaps after all you had been unlucky to Jennifer, committed that crime of trying to possess her separateness, —craved more than even she could give without destroying herself. So in the end she had gone to someone more wholesome for her nature. Perhaps after all the balance had been sorely ill-adjusted: she your creator, you her destroyer. Perhaps she should be surrendered to Geraldine now, ungrudgingly. She said, looking up at Geraldine:

"I daresay you make her very happy."

Geraldine said, answering Judith's gaze unwaveringly:

"Yes, we are very happy together. Absolutely happy."

"She is a good companion, isn't she?"

"Oh yes," she said, her heavy lips lifting in a faint curious smile.

What was in her voice?—insolence?—triumph?—malice?—an obscure challenge? She seemed to be implying that she knew things about Jennifer of which you had no knowledge. She was a terrible woman.

Judith could find no words, and the other continued:

"She's starting to find herself. It's very interesting. Of course nobody's understood her here."

"And you think you do?"

"I do, yes."

"Oh, but I'd never dare say that about a person I loved! You might seem to touch everywhere and all the time be strangers." Judith clasped her hands and spoke urgently:

"Oh, don't you feel how you might long to say to someone you love: I give you all myself, all myself—and all the time be sad because with all your efforts and longing you *know* you never could—that the core can't ever be stirred at all? It seems such dreadful arrogance to say—" she stopped short, pressing her hand to her lips, shutting her eyes. After a pause she added quickly: "But I don't doubt you love her . . ." she sighed. "Thank God this term is nearly over. This is a terrible place for getting overwrought."

Geraldine seemed to be thinking deeply. Her face was awake and preoccupied behind its heavy mask.

"It's very odd," said Judith, "how she doesn't value her brains in the very least—isn't interested in them—can't be bothered. I suppose you know she's the most brilliant history student of her year. Easily. Of course she's never worked, but she could have done anything she liked. In spite of all her idleness and irresponsibility they were still excited about her—they thought she'd do something in the end. And I was going to make her pull it off. I could have—in one term. I mean I could have once. Not now of course."

Her voice ceased drearily. As if it would matter to Geraldine how much Jennifer wasted brains, or academic opportunities . . . as if it would move her!

The bell started to ring for Hall.

"There!" said Judith, "I must brush my hair I suppose, and go down. Are you coming to Hall?"

"No. I'm going to dine in Cambridge."

Judith rose and stood before her, looking full at her for the last time. She thought suddenly: "But she's not beautiful! She's hideously ugly, repulsive."

That broad heavy face and thick neck, those coarse and masculine features, that hothouse skin: What taste Jennifer must have to find her attractive! . . .

Oh no, it was no good saying that. In spite of all, she was beautiful: her person held an appalling fascination. She was beautiful, beautiful. You would never be able to forget her face, her form. You would see it and dream of it with painful desire: as if she could satisfy something, some hunger, if she would. But she was not for you. The secret of her magnetism, her rareness must be for ever beyond reach; but not beyond imagination.

Judith cried out inwardly: "Tell me all your life!" All about herself, where she had come from, why she was alone and mysterious, why she wore such clothes, such pearls, how she and Jennifer had met, what knowledge her expression half-hid, half-revealed. Time had swept her down one moment out of space, portentously, and now was sweeping her away again, unknown. And now, in the end, you wanted to implore her to stay, to let herself be known, to let you love her. Yes, to let you love her. It was not true that you must hate your enemies. What was all this hatred and jealousy? Something so terrifyingly near to love, you dared not contemplate it. You could love her in a moment, passionately, for her voice, her eyes, her beautiful white hands, for loving Jennifer—anything.

The bell stopped ringing.

"Good-bye," said Judith. "I'm late." She held out her hand.

Geraldine took it. Her hand was cool, smooth and firm.

"Good-bye."

"Are you—staying much longer?"

"I'm going away to-morrow."

"I'd like to have known you better," said Judith, very low, and she lifted her eyes to the long, hidden eyes of Geraldine. "I hope you and she will be happy when you go abroad." She opened the door politely, and then said, smiling: "We won't forget each other, will we?"

"No," said Geraldine, still watching her. But she did not smile.

They went their different ways along the corridor.

Now to go down to the dull food and clamour, to sit among them all and torture herself with fancying intercepted glances which might have pity in them; to hear perhaps, her name and Jennifer's in a whispered aside; to try with anguish to guess which of them it was who had dared to drag her pain from its hiding-place and proclaim it aloud.

II

Jennifer lay in bed; and on her door was pinned a notice signed by the matron: *No visitors allowed.*

Her friends were disconsolate, and the evening gatherings were leaden spirited. It was certain there had not been so much evening work done before in the whole two years. There was nothing better to do now: no excitement, no laughter or colour. They went on tiptoe past the shut door and the notice: for Jennifer, so it was said, was threatened with nervous collapse, and her only chance lay in sleep and quiet. But in all the rumours, discussions and communications which went on over Jennifer's case, Judith took no part.

Once indeed when they were all at Hall and the corridor was empty of echoes, Judith had crept up to the door, lingered hesitating, then noiselessly turned the handle and looked in.

The electric lamp shone beside the bed and Jennifer lay with her face turned to the wall. All that was visible was her hair, tossed in a rough mass over the pillow and palely burning where the dim light struck it. Her death-like unconsciousness was intolerable pain. She should have stirred at least, feeling a presence through all the seals of sleep. . . . But she did not move; and night after night the sight of that unstirring hair upon the pillow returned, mocking her longing to reach to Jennifer with a picture that seemed the symbol for all that was eternally uncommunicating and imperturbable.

They said she was to be sent home before the end of term; then that her mother had arrived, was to take her away on the morrow.

That night the message came: Jennifer wanted to say good-bye to Judith.

Jennifer's boxes stood packed and strapped in a corner. Her personality had already, terrifyingly, been drained from her two rooms. There was now only a melancholy whisper of that which, during the two years of her tenancy, had filled the little space between her walls with a warm mystery. She had become identified with the quickening of imagination, the lyrical impulse. Oh, how ridiculous, how sad, to have made one person into all poetry! To-morrow it would all be finished.

Judith went softly from the sitting-room into the bedroom: and there was Jennifer lying back on her pillow and waiting.

"Hullo, darling," she said. Her voice was low and mournful.

"Jennifer!"

She put out her hand and Judith took it, clung to it, while Jennifer drew her down beside her on the bed.

"Jennifer, darling, how are you?"

"I'm better, I've slept. I was so tired. But I'm going away."

"I know."

"Don't tell anyone, Judith, but I'm not coming back."

"Oh, Jennifer, what shall I do without you?"

"Darling, I *can't* come back," she said in an urgent, painful whisper.

"I know. I know. And I must come back, I suppose. I'm like that: I can't uproot. You're wise, you never grow roots. So you can go away when you want to without making a wound in yourself. It's no good my pretending I could do the same. I must wait; though goodness knows for what: the examinations I suppose. This place without you. . . . Oh!"

She pressed her forehead against the hand that still held hers, abandoning, with her last words, the effort to speak lightly.

"Darling," said Jennifer. "It is making a wound—you ought to know. You're making a wound."

"Then why do you go away from me?"

"Oh, Judith, I've got to go!" She sighed wearily. "What I really wanted to say to you was: please forgive me for everything."

"Forgive. . . . Oh, Jennifer. . . ."

"Don't say there's nothing to forgive. Say I forgive you."

"I forgive you then."

"Because I have hurt you, haven't I?"

"It wasn't your fault. Nothing's been your fault."

"I've been unhappy too. I thought I was going off my head a little while ago." She sighed again. "It's all such a muddle. I do get into such muddles. I'm so used to flying to you to be got out of them, I can't think how I shall manage without you."

Judith was silent, her throat aching with tears. Never to hear Jennifer's step hurrying along the corridor, never again to see her burst flushed and desperate into the room crying: "Oh, darling, I'm in such a muddle. . . ." That had been such a thing to look forward to: it had been such pleasure to comfort, advise, explain, even though the muddles had generally been found to be laughable trifles.

"I wanted to say some more things, but it's so difficult," Jennifer went on. "Now you're here I can't say anything."

"Don't try, darling. I'm quite happy."

Her face had got thinner, thought Judith, her expression had little if anything of the child left in it, and her lips which had always been slightly parted in repose were now folded together in an unnatural line.

"Mother's come to fetch me." She laughed. "She is being extremely dutiful and chilling and grieved at me. I hope you haven't come across her. She's not a bit nice. I'm going to Scotland. Oh, the moors! I'll soon get better there. Then I'll go abroad or something." She laughed again. "I suppose Mother'll try to send me back here next term. I shall have some glorious wrangling. Perhaps they'll wash their hands of me for ever. If only they would! Oh, if I could be on my own!—no ties!"

Her eyes sparkled at the thought of breaking her fetters. Already, in spite of her sorrow, she was thinking with excitement: *What next?* She was ready to contemplate a fresh start. Soon her indomitable vitality would light upon and kindle fresh objects; and all around her would live, as once you had lived, in her glow. She would have no time, no room, to remember what had once absorbed her. Judith turned her head away, tasting despair; for it seemed that the zest for life they had both shared burned in Jennifer undiminished now that the time of sharing was over; while for her it had gone out, like a snuffed candle.

Jennifer fastened her great eyes upon her, whispering: "You don't know how I shall miss you."

Ah, she saw she had wounded,—was trying, too late, to make amends. Judith answered, making her voice harsh and scornful:

"Oh no, you won't. You'll find heaps of new thrilling people and you'll soon forget me."

"Oh—" was all Jennifer said, beneath her breath. She shut her eyes, and Judith saw her mouth alter and quiver. "You don't understand," she whispered after a long time. "No, you don't understand. God, I'm in such a muddle."

It was no use trying to find comfort from hurting Jennifer. There was nothing but pain to be had from the spectacle of that beloved face shrinking and helpless. Whatever it cost all must be made easy for her.

"I'm sorry, Jennifer, I'm sorry, my darling. There! don't worry. I understand. Don't cry. Listen: it's like this, isn't it? You're not happy here any more. You're restless. And you've been—been living too hard and you're worn out. So you want to get away from all the people you've been with—all the ones you associate with feeling ill and awful—you want to start afresh, somewhere quite new. Isn't that it?"

"Partly," whispered Jennifer.

"Things have all gone wrong lately. And I'm involved, aren't I? It's really about me that things have gone wrong. I don't know why—but I know it is so. So you really can't bear to see me any more."

"Oh, Judith!" She hid her face. "It sounds so terrible when you say it like that: 'Can't bear to see me any more' . . . Oh!"

"But I'm right, aren't I, Jennifer?"

"Oh, it sounds as if it were your fault, as if you thought it was something you'd done—"

"Then it's not—something I've done?"

"God, no!"

The relief of that fierce denial brought a momentary illusion of happiness, for she had painfully persisted in trying to fasten the chief blame on herself.

"I'm glad. . . . But it is true, isn't it, that I'm involved in all that's gone wrong; and that you must get away from me?"

"Oh yes, oh yes, because I can't bear myself—because I must forget—because the thought of you is such a reproach . . . the way I've treated you—" her voice was almost inaudible.

"Don't, Jennifer, don't. You've nothing to blame yourself for. It's just the way things happen. That's how I look at it. As long as it's not anything I've done, as long as you tell me I haven't—disappointed you somehow, I don't mind—much not understanding—"

"Oh, you're so good to me, you're so kind. And there's nothing I can do except hurt you. I've never done anything for you."

"Oh, Jennifer, you've been all my happiness for two years."

"It was very silly of you to be made happy by a person like me. You might have known I'd let you down in the end."

"You haven't let me down."

"Yes. I've made you unhappy."

It was not much use denying that.

Geraldine seemed to be in the room, watching and listening. Judith felt her head droop as if beneath a tangible weight, and a most dreary sense of impotence fastened upon her. What was the use of talking, when all the time Geraldine, absent and untalked-of, controlled their secret decisions? To ignore her made a mockery of all attempted solutions and consolations, and yet to speak of her seemed impossible.

"Well, you've been unhappy too."

"Yes. Oh yes. Oh, Judith! There's something I must ask you."

She put her face against Judith's arm, and the desperate pressure of her eyes, nose, lips upon the bare flesh was strange and breath-taking. Her lips searched blindly over wrist and forearm into the hollow of the elbow where they paused and parted; and Judith felt the faint and thrilling touch of her teeth. . . .

But then Jennifer flung her arm away and said in a dry and careful voice.

"I wanted to know: did you cry in your room night after night because I—because of the way I was behaving?"

"I've never cried, Jennifer."

That was true enough. There were no tears to soften such arid and infecund griefs.

"Ah!" she said. "You say that as if—"

"Why did you think I'd cried?"

"Oh, it was just an idea I got. Something somebody said put it into my head and I couldn't get rid of it. But now—I don't know. The way you spoke makes me almost wish you had cried: because you seemed to mean you hadn't been able to."

She shut her eyes and lay still.

"Jennifer, don't. Don't let's go on. What's the use? You know we're not putting anything right or doing each other any good. It's getting late—so I'd better go. You'll be so tired to-morrow and it'll be my fault. I ought never to have come."

"Oh, don't go yet!" she besought. "Look. We won't talk any more. There's some things I must say, but perhaps I'll be able to say them later." She sat up in bed. "I've been feeling so gloomy! Let's try to be cheerful for a change. Really, my gloom has been beyond a joke. I've wanted to hide in a dark hole. Imagine! I think my hair must look awful. Fetch me my brush, darling. I simply haven't had the heart to give it a good brushing for ages."

Her spirits were rising: the tone of her voice had changed, and the peculiar individuality of her manner of speech had returned with surprising suddenness.

"Would you like me to brush it?" asked Judith.

"Oh yes, darling. You've a lovely hand with the hair brush. Geraldine would brush my hair for me every night, and my God, the agony!"

The brush wavered and stopped for a moment in Judith's hand. But Jennifer seemed unaware of any cause for embarrassment. It was as if she had cast from her the self whose lips were sealed upon that name. It was of no more account to her in her present mood to announce that Geraldine had brushed her hair than to declare, as she did in the next breath, that her hair needed washing. Geraldine no longer existed for her as a person of dark significance. She had become dissolved like all other grave perplexities into a uniform light ebullience and froth; and her name had been thrown off unconcernedly and forgotten on the instant.

Amazing, terrifying, admirable creature—thought Judith—who, when life pressed too heavily upon her, could resolve life into airy meaninglessness; could pause, as it were deliberately, and re-charge herself with vitality.

Judith brushed out the strange, springy electric stuff, and then buried her face in it a moment. Surely Jennifer's secret lay in her hair: perhaps, if it were cut off the virtue would go out of her.

"I'm hungry," said Jennifer. "Darling, there's some cake in the cupboard. Mother brought it. She does know how to minister to the flesh

I will say. She's that sort of woman you know: holds you with hot-water bottles and pudding and destroys you spiritually. And would you like to make some chocolate, darling? Let's feel bilious together for the last time." She laughed cheerfully.

They ate and drank, and then Judith came and lay on the bed beside her, and she slipped her arm beneath Judith's thin shoulder, patting it as she talked.

"I forgive all my enemies," said Jennifer. "Tell Mabel I forgive her and I hope God will cure her spots in time. She has been an enemy, hasn't she? She'd like to knife me. Give all my chemistry and biology books to Dorothy. She can't afford to buy any. I shan't ever look at them again, thank God. If I have to earn my living I shall direct my talents towards something more flashy. Where shall I be, I wonder, by the summer? When you're all sweating over your exams I shall laugh to think of you.

"Darling, I've left you my copper bowl. You always said it had nice lights in it. If I go to Italy I'll send you a crate of oranges for it. It looks its best with oranges. It's the nicest thing I've ever had, so of course it's for you. Take it and don't forget me." She lay back looking white and tired.

"Oh, Jennifer—" Judith clutched her hand and was speechless. After a while she added: "I shall feel I haven't quite lost you. Your lovely bowl. It's always seemed such a part of you."

"It's all of me," whispered Jennifer. "I leave it to you."

The momentary lightness was now past, vanishing as swiftly as it had come. There was now such a sense of approaching desolation as had never been before in life. This was the end.

"Then I must say good-bye," said Judith.

"Draw back the curtain."

Judith obeyed. As she went to the window she felt Jennifer's eyes upon her.

The night was frosty, dark and still, and the midnight stars glittered in trembling cold multitudes over the arch of the sky. Below the window the unmoving trees made a blot of yet profounder darkness. Across the court, the opposite wing of the building was just distinguishable, a mass impenetrably deep; but there were no lights in the windows: not even in Mabel's. Everybody in College was asleep.

"Oh!" sighed Jennifer. "The smell of the limes, and the nightingales! I'd like to have had them once again."

Judith let the curtain drop and came quickly and sank on her knees by the bed.

"Then come back, Jennifer, and have them with me. Why not, why not? You'll be well by next term. Everything will be forgotten. Our last term . . . Jennifer!"

"No!" she covered her face with her hands. "No, Judith, I could never come back here. Everything's gone all wrong. Everything's as if—as if it had been poisoned. I must go away and get it straight. Listen." She put both arms around Judith's neck and held her in a hard painful embrace. "The things I meant to say,—I don't think I can say them. I thought I could before I saw you, but now you're here it doesn't seem clear any more. I don't really know what I think—what I mean, and if I tried to explain you might—might not understand. Oh, Judith!"

She began to cry, and stopped herself. "There are things in life you've no idea about. I can't explain. You're such a baby really, aren't you? I always think of you as the most innocent thing in the world."

"Jennifer, you know you can tell me anything."

Yet she knew, while she pleaded, that she shrank from knowing.

"Oh yes, it's true, you understand everything." Jennifer tightened her arms desperately and seemed to be hesitating, then said at last: "No, I'm in a muddle. I'm afraid. I should explain all wrong, as I always do. But I'll write to you, darling. I may not write to you for some time: or it may be to-morrow. But I swear I'll write. And then I'll explain everything."

"And we'll see each other again, Jennifer? We'll meet often?"

"Perhaps. I don't know. It depends," she whispered. Her face was still hidden, her arms firm in their strangling grip.

"Oh yes, yes, Jennifer! Oh please! Why these mysteries? Jennifer—if—if there's somebody else you're fond of I don't mind. Why should it make any difference to you and me? I'm not jealous."

"I'll write to you," repeated Jennifer, very wearily whispering.

"Soon then, soon, Jennifer. Tell me how you are, what you're going to do. Tell me if you go abroad, who—who you go with. Tell me everything. Because I shall wonder and wonder. I shall imagine all sorts of things. . . . Jennifer. . . ."

"Hush, darling. I'll be all right, I swear. And I swear that *directly* everything gets clear I'll write to you. And then we'll see. You do trust me, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And you must promise me to answer."

"Yes."

"But don't write before I write to you."

"No."

"Good-bye, my darling." She let her arms fall to her sides.

At the door Judith turned, forcing her mouth into a smile, but Jennifer was not looking at her. Once again, only the tangle of her hair was visible, burning in the lamplight.

The end of the term.

There had been no word from Jennifer. She had vanished. But she was to be trusted: you had only to wait and she would write. Or was she not to be trusted?

Her copper bowl stood on the table, and there seemed no other rumour of her left in the whole place, save on the tongues of people; and even they were sparing of her name, spoke it with doubt and hesitation.

On the last day of term, Judith, peering a moment into the aching emptiness of Jennifer's room, saw the cord of her old manly Jaeger dressing-gown lying in the grate.

NOTE ON MARIAN COX'S "THE CROWDS AND THE VEILED WOMAN"

Monsieur has longed for a woman with a soul, something he has never found among mundane women. But at last he meets a being who is impalpable, ill, and seemingly veiled from sunlight and humanity. She has stepped out of his dreams. He marries her, but he becomes increasingly aware of the difficulty of apprehending her full personality. He decides to bring her to Paris, where she can be immersed in crowds and become one of the many. Taking her to his friend Gaspard, a painter, he persuades her to sit for a portrait. Monsieur wishes her elusive qualities to be made permanent on canvas.

Our selection begins as Gaspard paints her portrait. The "veiled woman" reveals that everything has been concealed from her—her parents, time of birth—and that she has lived under a veil, in a nunnery, as though dead. She recognizes only one reality: time.

Gaspard recognizes only one victor over time: art. Yet as he thinks he apprehends her color and her face, he realizes that he is always painting a veil.

MARIAN COX

The Crowds and the Veiled Woman

Mrs. Marian Metcalf Cox (1882-194?), to give her full name, was one of those esoteric writers who are unjustly forgotten. A woman of universal interests, with an original philosophical mind, she produced *Spiritual Curiosities,* such as the arts of love, conscience, the psyche of women, and wrote bitingly of *The Dry Rot of Society,* (among whose essays "The Fools of Love" is the most challenging). Her *Ventures in Worlds* treats of our musical culture, reveals our "incestuous" system of marriage, and studies the Japanese woman as a product consciously manufactured for desired qualities by a male, feudal society. In *The Crowds and the Veiled Woman,* following in the path of the de Goncourt brothers, she attempts an analysis of the relationship of soul and body in love: the death of one, the chrysalis and the birth of the other. It is one of the few purely intellectual studies of love in English. An artist seeks love through painting the portrait of a married woman, only to discover that in the process of transferring her psyche to canvas he has destroyed her soul.

IT was the first séance for the portrait. As they entered the studio she smiled faintly at Gaspard, as tho her mouth had gained some fluency from its smile of yesterday. But her eyes were immediately downcast, making him, as ever, wonder how and why this disquieting habit of withholding that which was the very natal fount of her soul's pure radiance had grown upon her.

In preparation for the sitting, her maid arranged some details of her toilet, behind a screen of reddish wood, and when she stept forth in readiness, she held her voluminous mist-colored veil, close together, high beneath her chin, around her shoulders,—whose gleaming nudity was outlined beneath the cadenced folds of the veil. She advanced toward the chair, now placed for her on a dais, then hesitated, one foot upon its single step, and turned her dark eyes upon the two men in a glance which, perhaps because of the high arch of the lashes over the now widely opened eyes, seemed full of a suspensive questioning—a sort of bland, placid bewilderment. An indescribable aerial daintiness was in that pose—as if she were, indeed, a winged creature just riveted in the act of alighting upon the ground. Then she mounted the step and assumed the directed position for the picture—a pose like that of a divinity who sits, solitary and unconcerned, without study or beguilement to please, sublime in her simplicity and simple in her sublimity, securely poised in its own perfection and the homage of all others. Her dress, of some sheer lightly woven stuff, fell all about her delicate limbs, distinctly outlining them, and gathering into multitudinous little folds about her like the draperies one sees in Byzantine paintings. Her chin was slightly uplifted, and her head rested in the pale amber sunlight which traversed that section of the studio in which she was placed, appearing to concentrate upon the close bouffance of her blonde hair.

Thus posed, then,—as if, indeed, it was timorousness which actuated her,—she softly drew down the veil from her throat and shoulders, baring them. The corsage of her dress was cut away as far as the arm slopes, square across the front, above the swell of her breast, and was edged with some white mesh of lace as indistinguishable from the whiteness of her flesh as the froth of milk is from the liquid. An oblation of whiteness,—her beauty was offered to the gaze of the artist, of the lover, and to the full penetrant lucidity of the day.

Gaspard viewed her bare throat with some surprize. Just before she had drawn down the veil from it he had wondered about it, fancying it as slender, fragile, consistent with her tenuous curves and limbs, and he saw it the contrary of this expectation. That volatility about her, which at times had made her appear like a flame which wavers with each breath; that attenuation and immateriality of her flesh, which made it appear as tho it could rest upon no human frame of bones, had no consistency with her deep vertebral throat—a de Milo throat—almost upon a line with the temples, for it betokened vitalization, a fundamental frame beneath its white plasticity; and within its columnar fulness, directly beneath the oval chin, was a faint indentation which looked like the last pressure of a palm left upon it in its molding.

Gaspard went to his easel and began to paint with an afflatus full of certainty. Monsieur lingered.

"Would it really matter if I remained a while today?" he asked.

"No. Not now, at the beginning."

"It is such a pleasure to see you occupied in the exquisite task of depicting her likeness. Ah, I envy you."

Gaspard was already distrait, lost in the fascination of educing from vision to canvas.

"I envy you, mon cher. And I thought that after I had learned what love was, never again would I envy you its substitute in art. But now"

—he sighed, leaning back against the cushions of the lounge, in the old familiar attitude of holding one knee—"but now it seems to me, just at present, that it may be more sufficing to paint a woman than to love one."

"Pourquoi?" said Gaspard, perceiving that Monsieur was in his old mood of half-mocking, half-serious volubility, desultory, inconsequent, and yet filled with that habit of intense thought which distinguished him.

"Well, as you know, one can not do both; and either is enough to fill a life. Love makes man a poet, and art makes man a poet. But the first is tactile poetry which destroys, and the other is tactile poetry which immortalizes."

"Vraiment!" rejoined Gaspard indifferently, only desirous of preserving his working isolation, and not averse to do so through urging Monsieur on in this strain, which, as he knew, would terminate in the inevitable monolog.

"Yes, because love seeks possession, while art is content with inspiration. The two are not compatible."

Gaspard thought only of the clear image before him, so definitely grasped by his sight. The image of a living woman, who yet remained so still and motionless in the restraint of the pose, that one would have thought that precise attitude as native to her as is the eternal repose—crouched upon stone claws—to the Sphinx. Her eyes looked afar off with their immutable fixity into the lofty and trackless azure of the skies. Monsieur continued:

"They are diametrically opposed. Love seeks change; art seeks the abiding. Love ever impels to destruction; art to construction."

"Love seeks destruction?"

"Oui, destruction. A man can not love a woman unless there is something in her which his love can destroy. Sometimes it is her purity which enthralls him, and then he seeks to destroy it. Sometimes it is because she is so free, entire, and whole, that she fascinates him, and then he seeks to mar those things by making her dependent upon him, by creating ties, relations, conditions for her. Or perhaps it is but her beauty which allures him, and then his passion is not wholly satisfied unless he sees it disfigured by something he can inflict upon her—weakness, maladies, the sufferings and deformities of maternity. Only then is he completely satisfied. And such a satisfaction marks the cessation of the activity of love, desire. Thus, does love not urge to destruction—either to the satiety which is a destruction of itself; or else to destruction of some one of the physical or psychic influences in the woman, which has awakened it in him?

"A man loves when he recognizes something in the woman which his love can change or destroy. His gratification is only gained at the expense of some loss in her. Always there must exist in her something to be lost, risked, changed, or hurt through her reciprocity to his love, otherwise she possesses no charm or further attraction for him. Purity, beauty, or self-sufficiency attract him more than anything else, for certainly these he can destroy. Nature has clearly marked the intention of love—in thus making love's fruition in woman—a thing of change and disfigurement of her. All in order to destroy love in the man and to give him the cessation of its activity—desire, for which, unconsciously, he is always striving. When a woman possesses no attractions whatsoever, or else has lost them through the agency of her lover,—only then can a man turn from her with the complete indifference which is equivalent in every symptom to love's most supreme gratification. *Voila,* I ask can perfection in any form be the aim of love? Alas, no, perfection belongs to art alone."

Gaspard scarcely heard him, so absorbed was he in the long-denied felicity of exercising his craft.

"The sense of futurity must always exist in love, upon that its continuity depends. Something ever to be gained, something to sustain desire, something to lash the nerves to expectancy, something to make the heart throb with hope, something just beyond the reach, tantalizing the finger-tips with its nearness, disturbing the senses with the possibility of its loss—that is love.

"The sense of futurity is the ether which inflates the lover's heart to its highest capacity, otherwise it falls into unleavened matter, deadened or impure. But the artist—ah, he needs only the sense of the present to uplift him to the highest; there is nothing beyond the embrace of his eyes and thought. He lives in the totality of the moment. He revels in all its vividness and wonder. He becomes master of the present. And it is perfect to him even in its fugacity, for he knows he can eternalize it.

"The artist exalts the present and the immediate; the lover is exalted by the future and the remote. Which, then, is the most enticing? Which the most valid and secure?

"The artist finds the consummation denied the lover. All the efforts of life are instigated by desire of consummation; its usual form—the two in one called possession. Love seeks this union through the body. Art through the soul. Love's method is sensation. Art's is understanding. Which, then, I ask, is the more abiding? The perfect possession of the artist is only won by him through the prelude of—renunciation. Only an artist can renounce. And the man, when he too can renounce the thing he loves, takes the first step toward becoming the artist. An artist is a creator, and we only create through the soul. The soul is deciduous in its growth, its core only found after the shedding of many losses, of the sacrifice of many enwrappings, after the pain of many forfeitures. Many of the Greatest have deliberately renounced or slain their love in order to become the artist.

"She who has inspired their dreams has been preserved by them from the carnality that would have destroyed them. They knew that gratification could not be given to the lover without loss of the thing beloved, but that through becoming the artist they could completely possess her. The great loves—immortalized in art—afford this testimony. Par example: Dante dwelt in the same city with Beatrice, and yet seems to have avoided seeing her after he had once received the cherished inspiration of her vision and smile; Shelley, who deserted Mary, wrote his most exquisite poetry to her; Byron was constant in no love save the one from whom he was separated; Da Vinci was not inspired by woman until he beheld one—Lucretia Crevelli, at Rome—as the Unattainable, who henceforth became Muse of his dreams; Watteau won fame and attained greatness only after his passion for La Montagne had been defeated and renounced; Rossetti painted his masterpiece, the 'Beata Beatrix,' inspired by love of the wife whom he had lost a year previously, having died, as others said, of a broken heart at his neglect; Paganini did not become a great musician until after he had murdered the mistress whom he adored to such a degree that, repining over her death, he became the supreme artist; Virgil never beheld Dido, and hence saw fit to make her his immortal goddess of love and passion;—all these, through deprivation of the gratification of their love, procured its supreme possession as artists. I have always fancied that Caligula had an instinct of genius when he declared himself to be only in love with the moon. To the artist, woman must ever remain the unattainable Urania; then his homage for her can be impassioned to dare the wildest space, and he will hurl forth constellatory festoons from his brain for her decoration, which will illumine the night for all to enjoy; whereas the lover—had he his way—would devour and absorb each of those stars already surrounding her, or cancel all their brightness into the milky way of matrimony, for love has nothing for the beloved but the hunger and the jealousy which would obliterate worlds for a touch. So I say—is not the artist superior to the lover? Does he not merit the most perfect consummation? The lover's possession is like the embrace which turned Juno into a cloud, the artist's embrace is like that which turned Daphne into a laurel. In the seizure of one remains—nothing; in that of the other may be—glory."

"But you—the lover—have not found a cloud?" interjected Gaspard, smiling at the whimsical mood of Monsieur decrying that which, as he knew, was treasured most by him.

"Who can say, yet? I only know that the sense of futurity is in my love, and that my aim is that of passion. Indeed, I do not understand my own feelings, because I am too ardently experiencing them. We can never understand love until it has fallen from passion into affection. Affection is a habit; we criticize our habits, and criticism is reformatory.

"No; I admit I can not understand my love, since it would seek to change the beloved. She is so completely the ideal, so peerless in her purity, so immune in her ineffability, so sufficing in her unlikeness to every woman hitherto known for the idolatry of a man,—that why I should desire to change her, to make her spirit more obviously that of the woman, is something I fail to understand. She satisfies me implicitly. And yet I am obsessed by the anxiety to change her—lest I lose her. I desire to derange her passivity, to alter her self-poise, to transfuse the marble of her being with all the currents which beset flesh. I would have her more expressive, more animate, more vital, buoyant even with the surgence of her deepest blood—hidden in her now like the blush within the bud. And why do I desire this? Why would I change that which is supreme of its kind? Ah, this desire to change her is but the desire of the lover, the human desire. I fear it. It seems that to change her in any way would be a spiritual injury—a sacrilege!"

Monsieur was more like himself of old than he had been since love had entered his life. Again he exposed the antithesis which underlay his character; the heart which craved the reality of its dream, and the intellect which feared the reality of its dream. It was the old inquisitive probing which seemed to say: "I love; yet why do I love? Yet I must not ask lest the handling endanger the bloom from my love." It was as tho the intellect had not yet entirely succumbed to the heart.

And the woman appeared, as ever, oblivious; unstirred by any communication with her environment; imperturable, as tho frozen in the gracious constraint of her pose; all her vitalities as if in abeyance from some inner compulsion; all the forces of her personality as if deflected from their natural course; all her senses as if in an alien seclusion from the world,—as tho having no kinship or gain to imbibe from the external play they had turned inward, and were exercising themselves there in a tutelary life of listening, whispering, savoring, that perfect essence—herself.

No longer had that inimitable self any tendency to disquiet or mystify Gaspard, for he felt that at last he *understood*. She was living in the sacerdotal life of an inexperienced self, her entire being resting upon what is termed, in science, *coenesthesia*: the totalized core and foundation of the selfhood, compact in its purity, unsurrendering any of those forces ordinarily lost through the myriad channels for spending and manifesting and exhausting one's life,—which human experiences teach and the percussion of others upon one opens up like running wounds, wounds which cry and laugh and disgorge and devour —all reaching out to something *outside* themselves, for healing or filling or giving.

And that which had long dwelt in Gaspard's consciousness without taking explicit shape, was now recognized as the ideal whose counterpart was this woman.

In her was that fixity of the self, upon which was the impress of Eternity, and the sacred seal of Art. She was revealed to his view in a perfect adjustment of spirit to its substance. All was visible in her as she gave herself to the light—all definite, precise, sincere, and limpid, as can only be that Beauty which is founded upon Truth.

Verily, the soul has no secrets.

Her eyes, in their far-away look, profound in darkness, and yet unveiled to the light as completely as still lakes,—unambushed by foliage, unbroken by the air, reflecting celestial planes upon their clear and opaque surface.

What simplicity in this vision! With what ease it could be transferred to canvas!

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The unknown—which can only be discovered by man in so far as it can be invented. This, too, now Gaspard acknowledged. For, beholding her soul, he had recognized that it contained *all* and *more* of the various natures, the seers and thinkers among mankind during the ages have attributed to it. It was the vital principle of Stahl, the vortice of Descartes; the globe of Madler; the atoms of Democritus; the air of Diogenes; the flux of Heraclitus; the elements of Empedocles;—all was equally true, and all was equally false; because soul can only be understood by soul, and *the life of the soul only begins with the death of the body.*

And Gaspard had been granted the glimpse of her soul only because he had seen her while her body was yet dead; dead to its consciousness, to its senses, disconnected wholly from that world whose sole mission is to ripen it, to felicitate it, to perfect it—to the degree that it can destroy the soul.

The soul had retained itself in her longer than in all others—because of the preservative egis of her veil; but finally, little by little, day by day, minute by minute, the body had disenthralled itself from its hold, and had trafficked in it, had stolen from it, in order to manifest itself completely in the only *visible* life—that of the body.

And at last, with the dawn of solution came the knowledge that *there*—where he had beheld her soul—in her eyes—*was deserted now.*

Her eyes were void of soul!

Their essence was what had evaporated into her veins; their vitality was what had imparted to her all her glow and vigor; their being was what had surcharged her with the turgid, hectic streams of life.

To its incipiency he reverted again, recalling just how the transfiguration had manifested itself in her, all having been revealed in her eyes. Yea, her eyes had yielded themselves, grade by grade, subtle wave by wave, donating their pristine elements to achieve her unexpiable vivification. From that fount her ethereality had encardined itself; had spread the enrichment of matter through the pillaging of their ether; had fortified the flesh through vandalizing the spirit.

All had been seen by him as it had revealed itself in her eyes. All that she now was had been taken away from them, fading them, blighting them, bleaching them, until finally was left in them—what?

What wreck—of color?

And he shuddered from the tread of ghostly fears upon his spirit as he realized that in them was left—nothing to see, nothing to paint, nothing in whose actuality he could even believe.

And the fears deepened into a panic of sudden alarm, lest he see the truth of what he now knew. Never, never, would he dare look within them and face their truth.

And what was it—he asked himself—what was it that had wreaked its horrible will upon her? To whom did she owe that unintelligible, unholy life? What had slain the soul in her to feed the body?

Was it Monsieur's love? Was it Gaspard's art? Was it—

But before he could formulate the final annotation, she burst out in babbling speech:

"Ah, how the sun shines to-day. When it shines—so radiantly—it seems as tho it was solely fashioned, in order to prevent the gaze from aiming high. It is the only revelation in life. And yet is like a thunderbolt, striking down the vision from the heaven to the earth. There is nothing so supreme as it, and yet the supreme strikes down to the low.

"And you love—this sun?" he interjected in a sudden rancor.

"I love it because it has saved me from Time, and has shown me that the universe, instead of being an hour-glass doomed to mark the everlasting traces of Time, is a sun-dial, marking its lights as the only events."

And her harping upon this theme exasperated him to a sickening revulsion against it and against her. Her love of the sunlight and recurrent insistence upon its phases, made him feel that unreasoning hate one ever feels against the inordinate homage paid to some idol, in whose worship one does not share. The sunlight, always the sunlight, in her mind as upon her body. And what was it after all?

Not a Revealer, no; it was only a Colorist—just as he was—and colors lie. They serve but one purpose—to conceal truth under the illusions of beauty in order that man can believe and therefore live.

Color, too, was only a veil to conceal matter lest one behold the one hideous law—the same for a universe or a molecule—the law of life; swarming, prodigious life; whose only purpose, or meaning, or end, is more life. Like art, like love, like every appearance, the sun veiled realities from man's perception. The Arch-Veiler; during the day it hid the loneliness of stars; during the night it concealed the vacuity of space. The day, it spent in chasing away the shadows from men's sight, in order to lodge them within the struggles of their hearts. The night, it made, by disgorging the shadows to openly besiege, so that all be driven to lock their consciousness away in sleep. All are the dupes of the sun. Its light is the hilarity of conquest. Its dark is the ruse to test man, medicated by its rays during the day, to resist the night. All are the dupes of the sun. And Gaspard recognized as true that hideous paralyzing thing from which antiquity recoiled, the thing that makes reason totter, and the heart to clamor against itself, knowing there is for it neither outlet nor surcease—*Solem Falsum.*

"If you love the sun—then what perchance can you hate?" he exclaimed, in the grim sardonic ire of his loathing.

"There is but one thing that I hate," suddenly she lowered her voice, whisperingly.

"Pray, what may that be?"

"I hate the moon."

"Ah,—"

"I hate it because all its life is gone, and yet it still exists. It has outlived itself. And yet is jealous of all life. With its hoary disk it is the mouth of the night, which yawns like the grave, holding nothing, and devouring everything. Its life is only a tenacious vacuum; which every night, ay, every night looks down upon me as tho it would fain suck up my little soul away from its spheres into—infinity."

"But the moon has been said to be the soul of the sun. It is its mirror."

"The soul has no life—that is why I hate it!" she continued, still whisperingly.

"As if I did not know it, as if I did not know it," burst out Gaspard, his heart suddenly convulsed with a cosmic terror, his entire being gasping as for breath, reeling from that sense of lostness whose unutterable bitterness brings the despair that can jest alike at life or death.

"I know it. I know it—I shall no longer deny. I know it because I have seen your soul die in your eyes. I have seen it die, daily, hourly, minutely, as I have seen their color fade!"

"Oh!" She clutched his arm as tho from the contagion of his terror. "What do you say? My eyes—faded?"

"The sunlight has faded them," he said, turning away, shuddering lest he behold the truth of his knowledge.

Ah, to draw seven veils over the *void* eyes. Never, never would he look within them again.

"Oh, if that is so, if the sunlight has really done this thing to me—then I do not care."

Instantly restored to glee, she laughed aloud, her little low laugh, the odd little laugh that was full of broken sonorities and unfledged sounds, just beginning to stir in that deep nest—her throat.

And that laugh completed his galling hatred of her life, of that life which he could never understand, because it itself was a veil. Her life was a veil, rendering her forever the unknown; beneath the veil—he *dare* not lift.

And then she seemed to become aware of his animosity, for she prolonged her laugh needlessly, tantalizingly; she fled from the studio with it still upon her lips; upon the threshold, stopping a moment to call back to him in blithe and joyous tones:

"What do I want with a *soul*—now that I have *life? . . ."*

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

The Marriage of Venus

SUPERFICIALLY Isidor Schneider's life-story parallels that of many other New Yorkers who arrived from Europe as infants—he was born in 1896 in the Ukraine—and subsequently worked themselves through the city's free colleges. But the resemblance ceases with Schneider's interests in literature: in ornate prose, the texture of language, the splendor of imagery, and rich allusion. Our selection from his *The Marriage of Venus* (1928), originally published in the *avant-garde* magazine "transition," is a fine example of a facet of his craftsmanship. He has been connected with a number of well-known publishing houses and has written much socio-political Leftist journalism, but his literary reputation rests upon two novels, *Dr. Transit* and *From the Kingdom of Necessity,* and two books of verse.

WHAT I have written is all the material I had at hand for constructing the story I saw painted on my vase. For several years it has stood on a little pedestal beside a bureau mirror in my bedroom. I have entered upon dreams with its figures last shut into my eyes and I have wakened to find on it my dream's conclusions.

I have read the story to an archeologist, who laughed and said, "It is possible because all things are possible"; to a historian of the ancient world who thought I followed a hint in Appollodorus; to an ethnologist who told me that a parallel story existed in Bantu folklore; to an artist who congratulated me enthusiastically and said the vase painting could mean nothing else.

And these comments satisfy me for the story is possible, is touched upon by the Grimm of classic civilization, is paralleled in the traditions of another race of makers of good myths, and has a simple truthfulness recognized by an artist. As such I present it to you.

When Venus dropped down plummet-like near the vessel in the prow of which her eventual husband was turning his young sound body and strenuous young face, a spray carved column of water ascended which in the tentative existence of the moment allotted to it, offered a magical loveliness.

The young man peering down at its vanishing saw that the body which displaced it was no less lovely. It rose dreamingly to the surface, its netted hair alive with the water jewels that crusted against its oiled surfaces, its sleek body alight with that amorous luster that shapely women bring with them from the bath; and gay ripples enfolded it collaring its edges with lacy spray.

It appeared at the ship bank, and was drawn up with what satirical sunlight on her shoulders and cavorting buttocks may be imagined if we conceive witnessing Phoebus to have had a sense of humor.

Venus had maybe considered the reputed dispatch in venery of sailors and was aware that the long abstinences of sea voyages gave them an impressive spontaneity in love. She may have been disappointed with the twisted bodies of the captains whom she had thus far seen on her reconnoiters, who appeared like large and unusual knots in their own rigging, and being feminine she may have been offended on approaching other vessels by the habitual groaning of the rowers too well accompanied by the clanking of their chains.

The young man must have startled her. His just burned pink body and strong round, red face must have broken in upon her like the thought of a fresh flower when one is oppressed with perfume. The sinisterly handsome shapes of the men whom she sought spilled away like wine overturned in rejection.

Lifted to the deck she sat down turning her face away, ruefully hidden under an arm, while the other ineffectually covered her breasts, the curves of which, jostled by the pressure, escaped like ripe fruit rolling from an overloaded arm. Her pose besides offered the node of her neck slipping from the withholding garment of her hair like some new, strange limb.

Breathlessly anticipant, Venus waited the first onslaught. She expected that, hesitating before her a moment, the young man would be tricked by the artful irritations of her attitude, would seize her with hot plunging fingers and knead her with downright knees.

Instead she felt herself suddenly swathed in rough sailcloth of which on those calm seas there was always to spare, and from which her indignant skin, accustomed to mist fabric and soft loveswollen flesh shrank back, and unappeased by the stammering, ministering voice of the young man which gave her apologies for the unmannerly publicity of a ship deck.

Nevertheless, instinctively, she pulled the harsh material to her body aware that otherwise it would disregard those only concave descents of her body which were left to her and would fall dowdily into the squalid pyramid for which her shoulders, elbows and saw-horse hips formed a scaffold.

It is in truth a tragic and pitiful moment to see the Paphian goddess who could still unjealously award Helen in the old days when the goddesses had become sufficiently yeared to be concerned about their beauty sue so abjectly for the apple and be given so rough and contradictory a leaf!

The ship was embarked from Athens for Memphis. It was the young man's first voyage alone after preliminary navigation with his father who dealt in general merchandise, selling everything from chariot harness and Attic jars to Nubian serving maids.

Although the marks of a severe education were upon him, he had the full jowled responsible face of those people who find life easy, that evolves from the folds and lappets of infancy to the folds and lappets of age, with an interval of youth between, during which the necessities of growth strips a foil of fat from the muscles. His bearing gave little evidence that he employed even the recesses at the academies.

He had been brought up to consider that morality was among the most important duties of a merchant in order to win finally a repeal from the thorough and termless ostracism which the class suffered.

It is true that his father, aware that he could not for long keep his son from the lupanars encysted on the docks and the market-place, had bid him bring back a young female slave not to cost above three hundred dinars for himself until a wealthy match could be arranged for him. Adultery and rape he was given to understand were privileges of the ancient families and the soldiers; and reasoning about it the useless occupation of sophists.

He had his youth in that strange meridional day of history during which Athens found herself suddenly and briefly an empire; when the town was at once capital, treasury, arsenal, barracks and campus of Greece. The young man could remember the swaggering soldiers whose gestures claimed the world. He learned soon enough that this was permitted them because the poor devils had their own lives on spec. And he was very early persuaded that as much as the ignored dawn and sunset made life possible on the earth, so much did commerce; and he had already a reputation for being shrewd and implacable, using his own strictness as a pretext for preying upon the small faults of others.

He drank little, even on feast days. He was already showing a fondness for food, but he was keeping it in restraint; and as for his love of women it was so well controlled that he himself did not know how powerful it was, how it would inscribe him in that confraternity of solid men who did a day of duties mainly because it earned them a house with the furnishings of bed and board, the pleasures of both of which they might indulge in with the approval of conscience and the acquiescence of law.

For several years he was to blow with the short bloom of youth, clean, ripe, exceedingly good to look at but without the dash that awarded beautiful girls to less favored bravos, without the retirement that brought to the thoughtful, the intimate and delightful aggressions of women, mystified.

All this Venus found out in the warm Mediterranean nights that followed, looking up to the plump stars, fruiting on the garden of the sky, and hearing the tremolos of the wind, the sighs of the obscure passion of the sea whose black brooding breathed around them. And all the while their nerves blistered on their own skins where they touched in calculated accidents of contact.

She was dressed now in dainty cloths from the young man's cargo. To these she had added unseen, by clandestine resort to an island fane, her corsets and the cestus, a girdle which had been irresistible merely because it had been so fashioned that it pushed up her two well coupled breasts, like a team of her own doves drawing nothing else than her heart.

The grace of Venus was not the tripping grace of nymphs. The body of Venus even in girlhood renowned for its ample pelvis and generous flanks was a magazine of charms that could not be safely carried without each step's prearrangement—particularly now at this age when these charms existed in a superfluity. So she walked slowly, her whole body ruffled by successive ripples of her soft muscle at each step.

Such occurrences as the emergences of her breasts were so frequent that the young man had he been older might have suspected their intent. He disregarded them however with an obstinate virtue which might have been deliberately calculated to infuriate the goddess.

One day she sat beside him and warmed a hand of his in her lap. She whistled in a low voice and at the summons two pigeons seemed to form out of the air and composing their wings sat down on her shoulders. Having thus revealed herself, she dismissed them in a flight as mysterious as the escape of a flame. Then imperiously she cried to the astonished man, "embrace me!" Utterly bewildered he laid an arm gingerly about her while her skin became a floor of dancing muscles.

"It is beyond your boy's wit to understand signs. I have ogled you like the filthiest little Amaryllis stirred by an extra-playful gambol of her lambs. You are too dull even to be startled by a miracle. You saw my birds, that were nothing till I called them and became nothing at my dismissal. Your dull eyes saw the sacred pigeons and did not understand this plain announcement. I am still to you the vulgar adventure of the naked survivor of a wrecked ship—pity me—chafe my cold arms—give me wine and cover me with sails—get a dog to lick the brine from between my toes"—She ended in hoarse, coughingthrust of laughter.

"I saw you standing on the poop," she continued in a sudden new entreaty, "I adored you. You were straighter than Anchises on the river bank. You are stouter than Mars, I swear. You have brass sinews like Vulcan. What magnificent shoulders you have, what arms, what a proud lung. Your face is younger than Adonis's, and lovelier; his was too virgin, infantile; my love was half mother and the rest old wife to him. He rode to the chase like a little boy on a pony and sulked till he was let go. You are a man, grown and strong.

"Remember, goddesses do not deign to come to many men and the men to whom they come should not oblige them to make explanations. It is not only stupidity to misunderstand—it is sin.

"I have preferred you to men who would make you shudder at the measure of their bodies; above men whose spoken word would be more prophetic and confusing than that of an oracle; above men whose beauty would make you understand why Achilles grieved so at the death of Patrocles; men at whose lips Didos kindle and wars flame up. Men whose tremors pound like sledges. And you sit like Pygmalion's image! One could hang you up by the ears like a pitcher and you would be as listless.

"I should leave you. Sensitive men would have understood that there was Divinity here.

"By all the wrinkles of Juno! I do not want your hands for tassels. If they hang this way about me, I shall only feel that I have an ugly ornament. How many words one has to waste upon you! Even Adonis understood what I wanted. He was interested in the chase and had besides the boy's distaste for anything that would remind him too soon of mothering.

"I do not believe you are a Greek. You are a Barbarian born in a swamp and left alone to grow up like a beast without the sight of a woman all your lifetime, till when you see one you do not know whether she is animal or bird and are as likely to try out your sword upon her as your arms. Ah, but beasts would have the sharp wisdom of their instincts!

"I should leave you here and go back to some shrine to decree among my communicants that men of your like be stoned out of my temple; and better that you be slain and I drink your blood from the source since you appear to deny it to me from the tap. Or perhaps I shall let you go back to serve an apprenticeship among Vestals and other wenches.

"Look, tell me, you seeing stone,—have you ever seen lips like mine, so perfect for kissing, so red and full, anywhere even in your dreams, after you have overheard some story of your father's. Have you ever seen such breasts so full, so round, such bowls of the pleasure that sustains life more than milk. Paris saw them and did not need to go to my face to forget the simpering jaws of Juno or the mincing thighs of Diana. I know you have dipped your hands in them secretly, the way children dip their fingers in honey jars. What did you do—lick them behind your back?

"Oh! you are an agony! Why do you blush—because a goddess honors you? You should be pale with fear. It is not as if a young woman came and offered her head to grace your armpit—"

It is my sad duty to report that the conversation of Venus probably took this tone; in which she not only forgot herself but the poor young man whom she so overwhelmed with fright and perhaps disgust that he understood what should have been kept from him most secretly, that he was confronting an old, albeit divine woman, beat on by her desire that like a clock ticked loudest in the night-time of her life. It may be related that he attempted a limp squeeze now and then and sipped an infrequent kiss from her running lips, and made no effort to extricate his knee which she had taken between hers; and retired as soon as he was able in the most profound confusion of dignity and shame.

We may well believe that Venus succeeded in wiping away these droppings of the truth upon the impression of the young man. Young men, it is not easy to forget, are the traditional prey of cautious women of iridescent age who manage to keep the illusions of its texture in the eye of light.

Experience is a door of mystery, and to youth not yet over the overawed perception of its innocence, impressed by all things that seem to exist comfortably, and finding in ruin, a sentimental analogue to development, such women seem to have the key, and to be gracious in using it. Indeed they seem to be the key itself worn to the lock and not rasping and grating and slipping on the tumblers like the young girls.

By mere identification, by being told that this was Venus who—the glamorous existence reconstructed itself around her presence. You could see her couched on a turf of Olympus indolently surveying the world which presented itself to her like a setting in a pantomime; perhaps brushing away the stars, the lights of which, as is known, are the flickerings of a sort of fireflies which the gods employ to light their special corners in heaven.

You could see her, nascent of the sea, following the swoon of a wide calm, having emerged after its profound labor from a huge bubble of surf, which was the prismatic eggskin around her existence, as smaller bubbles are the shells that hold the lesser undines.

You could behold her, stepping from her numberless shrines in all the lands where she was called by the many names of prayers; and where according to the temper of the people, the cheerful and complacent deity appeared in desired theocrasis, frankly and ritually voluptuous in the warm lands where the sun helped her by stripping bare the bodies and laying upon the heads of veins his warm rays, hymeneally; and in the cold lands taking on an austerity that won her the as keen ardors of chastity.

For she was a wise goddess and knew that it did not matter which way one faced in a treadmill; and you could feel that she had investigated the souls of men with ecstasy sunk into their bodies like probes.

But she knew men imperfectly nevertheless; having to see them through the very illusions with which she had provided them. These things could be felt about her like a playing halo once it was lit by recognition.

The impact of it upon the young man was ponderously decisive. She had summoned some more miracles to her service, and had agreeably intimidated him. After that it was not possible to doubt that trade winds and the currents and even the beneficent islands on the way were her sleight-of-hand. He felt infected by the sensuality that portrayed her like a strong perfume. In her presence stars became heavy like drenched seeds; the water mysterious and cloying; the motion of the ship a thick pulse; the wind like the sound of veins in the ears. She frightened him. His own desire struck him with panic. He tried to escape her. He waxed and waned in the alternations of meeting and escape like a vented bladder. He fawned and denied,—he faced and retreated. There was hardly a more tormented young man in antiquity.

Because the body of Venus was implacably ironical, it had the indifferent and inviolable ease of a statue. Its divine impunity gave its immodesties a rich righteousness. She sat and slept publicly, the fructuous contours of her body bazaarly arranged. It laughed at him in a way upon which no laughter could retaliate. It elegantly derided with symbols which no misunderstanding could avert and it involved in its most exquisite abandon a complicity which no vaulting horror of heart could escape; and always in its moments of basking it enforced a worship remorselessly commingled with the irreverence of desire.

It is necessary to record the probable incident that gave a plangent accent to the journey.

A mutinously logical sailor felt that this providential sweetheart was unjustly withheld by the of-course-tyrannical captain, from the men who deserved a share in her by unwritten marine law as in any other flotsam of the sea.

This sense of injury gave him that justifying moral indignation with which men invariably equip themselves for villainies.

Perhaps the impartial and comprehensive glance of Venus resting its disturbing moment upon him intrigued his vanity and became to him as fixed and faithful as if he held the eye open in his hand; and it is understood that the color of Venus which was of the stopped-heart pallor; and the shape of Venus which was like a retinus of hooligan nymphs about a sedate statue; and the attitudes of Venus which the wishing eye could read as courteous messages, all worked their insidious incitements upon a mind, perhaps volatile already with wine and precipitated upon lust by the tug of involuntary restraint.

It was a still Mediterranean night faintly embraced in the warm arm of a wind from Africa, and lit by that curved spark of suggested fire, the red fragment of the risen moon in its last quarter; a night relaxed steeply upon the sea, half in weariness and half in amorousness to which the water answers.

He is on watch for the night; the pendulations of the swaying ship-light alternate the scene, sheathing and unsheathing the deck. From below can be heard the sounds of sleep and somnolent oaring; from above the wrap of the sail and the sound of the small breeze crawling upon it, and the cordy clutch of tackle.

In a corner lies Venus curled up felinely in an indulgent huddle. It is easy to know the wantoness of her breath by the leaps of her succinct breasts. An arm seems to grope in the vain confession of sleep, for a bedmate; it is flung outward straight from the undulant body. The fingers are turned in like petals. The muscles crouch. The hollow of the arm seems a secret flourish of hospitality. She is lustrous and passionately shaped.

He heeds her breath. He watches her arm. The blackness looms up and shivers at his feet. It rises out of the sea like a fume. It reels about him screening everything with a tawny unread oblivion,—everything but the breathing body and the white arm. The stars wake restlessly and close again dwindling—under the dark lids.

The sail seems to fall down upon him, the ship to grow weak and bob upon his knees. Upon his knees he crawls to her on impulses of his hot body rather than on limbs. He tumbles upon her his hands, his feet, his shoulders, his head, emptying himself upon her as from a sack.

Afterwards aware of the usurpation, in the desire for vengeance, the inevitable response of the regnant female desiring for completion the cooling taste of catastrophe and out of a swift policy of concern as well, she let out one cry, calling the young man's name.

The scream loops around the ravisher holding him noosed in fear, but the end of it, leaps over the deck to the young man. He strides up horrible with passion but curled instinctively into the crouch of the wrestler. He leaps. The two bodies thump down. There is no sound besides their grunting and the slaps and falls of their bodies. Men awake. The moon seems to become suddenly and attentively clear. A member of the crew, a friend of the ravisher disengages himself and stands watchfully and memorably over their dark struggle. A long nude knife is in his hand.

As soon as the body of the sailor vaults up he stabs it and pulls out the blade with a twist that wrenches a terrible cry from its victim. He sinks down with incoherent beggaries among his spasms. Maudlin eyes rear up to the face of his slayer trying to understand the treachery. The young man rises sick with the stench of sweat and blood, while the executioner with no uncertainty of the improvisator, methodically picks out with the point of his dagger the last tremors of the convulsed body, calculating as an accompanying rhythm for his labor what prize will be his for the night's work, knowing that in the straits of love young men are generous.

Then the young man's body is purified and the deck washed and dried with salt.

Gradually the white dawn comes, then the full splendors of the chromatic dawn. The wind of the morning crepes the water. The hymn to Phoebus is chanted up, rises with the creak of voices like the creak of rigging, like a new sail. Venus sits, nude, screened, with preoccupied face, preparing herself for the day with a resplendent toilette.

Later she watches the spitted body of the sailor describing parabolas in its descent upon the water. Its splash is its only rite of burial as it drops into its diverse graves of the sea. As with a start of disgust the ship heaves off and the head twirls like a strange clot in its long foam train, following as upon a lasso.

Venus is sad, with a gentle and pleasurable melancholy. There is in the incident a suggestion of sacrifice, of a man bled of his life in an accidental homage. The regret of Venus who cannot help forgive love-madness is assuaged by the presence of the young man. She is downcast with a becoming terror. The young man's arm grows heavy about her. The movement of his body is sinuously halted by the grapple of desire. It is elated by the vanity of a protector and again pacified by the consciousness of new responsibility. Between kisses he dares to suggest greater privacy. He asks her to marry him as soon as they touch port while the astounded heart of Venus beats with wounds and laughter.

The ship teetered into Memphis some days ahead of its schedule, greeting the city with hailing prow and masts. From afar lay the battlements of the Nauarchy like immersed great thighs of the city. The fair body of the metropolis, garmented with the plaid of streets and studded with the ornaments of temples, and fringed with hills, had an eager and immaterial beauty. From anear however it was defiled by the stains of obvious humanity. Soldiers leaned smudgily on their spears. The afflicting stink of refuse rose from the water, pitted by swimming patches of the matter. The approaches from the edges had that inevitable squalor of rotting wood and that slime which animals and men mix with their tread from their own droppings, the mud of the banks and the unminding rains of the heavens.

This did not discourage huge convocations of human beings, laborers trotting under fantastic burdens, hawkers, peripatetic performers of feats and contortions, the beggars holding informal musee of notable deformities and diseases, some picking their scabs to excite a choicer horror, panders, pullers-in of gaming and drinking houses, venders of talismans, charms, prayers and other knick-knacks of divinity, and creeping, naked children amphibious, shedding ruinous rains from their small, slipping, wet bodies.

Through these Venus and the young man made their way solicitously escorted by the merchants to whom part of the cargo was consigned, and whose slaves were already unloading it. The crew, following them like water when a bung is pulled, flowed inevitably into the dives as into sewers.

The little group was joined by other traders whose elaborate amenities halted the procession.

The presence of Venus was a keen disappointment to them. For the welcome of the young man, courtesans of the first rank, known for their sweet voices, delightful gossip and wit, had been provided together with a debauch of wine and a surfeit of viands in a large hectic hall whose walls were asmirk with ribald paintings, and whose columns threatened the chastity of heaven. There the cold humor of business could be, especially in a young man, sublimated and warmed and made controllable.

But all this depended now upon what status this magnificently knowing woman, whose rich voice discoursed with such placid laughter, stood; whether she was an insubordinate slave sent for taming on the block, a mistress, a wife or a passenger.

The young man made an important secret of her identity; for the austere fillip it gave to his vanity.

The wife of one of the merchants was made hostess to Venus while they entered into the wary intricacies of business. It was the merchant's misfortune; he found his wife a changed woman from her brief communion with the goddess of Desire.

The expectations of all his hosts were disappointed. Their revel in the wide hall lacked the necessary, appointed abandon which would have oiled the wheel of festivity. The young man was set at the head of the table, very royally, with a very solemn fool for his counsellor and queens who were no Vashtis surrounding him. Fulminously spiced foods steamed under his nostrils; wine glittered; harps rang; young voices escorted the tune with harmonies.

The trick of flattery by deference failed through too total a success. It gave the young man a pompousness that at once hardened him. He had too narrow an imagination to be tricked into indulgence. It would have been better to have overawed him.

He failed ingloriously. He ate heavily but he did not drink beyond toast responses, and he regarded the girls mildly as a species of ornament to be smiled at like the figures in the wall paintings. Very early the convivium became listless. The girls to whom shyness was unmentionable sulked on condoning knees. A few merchants tottered in unenthusiastic drunkenness, themselves the only victims of their ambush of delights. And the night drained slowly into the marsh of the dawn.

On his return to Venus in the afternoon the young man brought with him two serving maids that he had bought in the market for her. It was his notice of permanence in their relations.

Venus made one more effort to win the unformal love of the young man.

They were in the villa of a chief commercial, one of those who already in those days occupied a public office as an accessory to his business. He had arrived at that position in affairs when the making of money had come to be too facile and routineer to interest him. He was rather concerned with ending his life, which was in decline, vividly and graciously. This was reflected in his face the natural shrewdness of which was being usurped by an ironical tolerance and the awareness of one who selects his sensations. He was the patron of poets and actors, of philosophers whose seriousness amused him, of a sculptor skilful in grotesques, of musicians who pleased him by trifling with familiar sounds, of the preachers of new cults who pleased him with their unconscious blasphemies, and of a young girl whom he kept not entirely for his pleasure but because he enjoyed playing with her naivete, and because besides, she offered that opportunity for pedagogy that old men require.

He invited the young man in order to have a little while the presence of Venus who had interested him at once. He wanted to see her more closely and to talk with her.

It was a great flattery. Only the great merchants and officers of state were called to his house. The young man swelled up with it. It seemed a confirmation of the honors he had won on his first trading bout which had become the talk of the port. To it the great man seemed to add deliberate compliments. He said, "You have made a mistake. It is ungraceful and unpropitious to buy a first cargo as shrewdly as you have. It is not proper humility in a young man. If there is no saving error in you, your case is ominous."

Later observing that the young man was supercilious to the young girl who seemed to cringe instinctively before Venus but erred impudently and loudly before the young man, he said, "I am glad you reveal a common failing of young men; you have not yet developed a taste in women."

The answer the young man made stirred him to a connoisseur's light laughter.

A symposium had been prepared and Venus had been given a seat of honor and her presence gave an unknown grandeur to the fete, ruling it with her celestial serenity. The old man was unable to decide in his mind what she was. The pout and the shrugs of the young girl beside him whom he pampered with jests and compliments, for the time failed of interesting him.

Venus spoke with a weary jesting like one whose plethoric knowledge is unmitigated by forgetfulness. The merchant thought of her as an hetaera who found love wearying without interludes of philosophy, who had come to desire virility of the mind. Later he thought of her as a queen or an aristocratic matron excessively amorous who conducted her adulteries with too much dignity to suffer shame. There was in addition a delicate, pungent staleness in her as of one too accustomed to life and needing perhaps monstrous stimulations to refresh her.

He held a parley with her in those crepuscules of words which the ripe minded brush from the opaque meanings. They laughed in the clear tones of those to whom no prejudice is a bar to enjoyment. Nevertheless Venus was uneasy. She was kept between her baffled desire and the shame of being detected in her defeats.

The young man looked on, adding applausive comment as if the performance of Venus was under his direction.

Meanwhile there intervened with fortuitous punctuations the gyrations of dancers skilled in the climaxes of prostrations; the melancholy chants of Egyptian singers; the sewing of an argument the cloth of which an invited philosopher passed around, each guest embroidering and ripping so that at the end it reached the philosopher in the same shape except for the stitch holes; and in particular emphasis the courses of food which were brought in with live coals in the plates to keep up the heat and wine served with choice of spices.

The old merchant turned to the young man in the hope of learning the identity of Venus from him; but the young man was too proud of his secret and defended it with melodramatic profundities.

"Do you keep him," he turned to her, "to use his stupidity as a protection of your incognito?"

He saw her face cloud and hastily retraced his conversation. Soon realizing her desire he arranged with delicate gallantry that she and the young man be left alone together.

The estate being out of the city it was indolently spread over many acres, from the alkaline sands where natron was brewed, to the grape arbors which yielded a rich wine.

The gardens into which they adjourned had a comforting spaciousness. Palpable fragrance from the flowers and humid ripe fruit hung over the garden. Nearby the river not forgetful of its caverns in the hills cooled the air, and fountains resuscitated the breeze. Trees fanned them like respectful attendants. But the overpowering sky pressed close, swarthily black, with stars like clear sweat drops. It folded them, nevertheless with a not unwelcome warmth and an appealing languour. These things they touched and tasted slowly, touching closer as their fastidious solitude was made known to them.

Venus discarded an outer vestment which fell as if bidden by the privacy. She rolled it together and pillowed it under the neck nape as she relaxed upon the grass which was cut often to be wetted with its own sap. She stretched her arms over her head with that gesture which tightens the muscles of the breasts and purifies their curves. Her head was thrust back seeming to reveal new crypts of the eyes, smoothing the chin and revealing spectacularly the throat which seems then to become that column of the body with whose fall the whole life crumbles submissively.

After a pause she held out her hand and drew the young man down to her with a swift violence. It is to be told that her knees see-sawed, that her white belly floated like a bubble, that she grovelled and grunted about the loose ends of the proffered body; that her touch made him shake as one who holds something unbearably cold or hot to his skin. One might have seen then the young man fluttering upon the end of his dignity like a tied bird. And still he knew not how to unlock himself, shut to her summoning knees, but himself, arm torn, mad-lipped, unable to hurtle out of the orbit of that aura made by the radiations of her passion.

It is painfully necessary to add that Venus with an unmannerly fury caught the arm of the young man on her teeth until the blood wried her palette; that she suddenly kicked and pummeled him with both feet and both hands; that she swore at him with a vehemence and an extremity of language that made it appear that the flaggeling prophets must after all have received their inspirations from divinity; and that with that epilogue of bland somersault which makes women such inscrutable paradoxists she suddenly confounded him with such melting embrace, such poulticing kisses and tears upon his wounded arm, such precipitate professions of love, such unmanning appeals for forgiveness that the young man was obliged to feel benevolent as well as virtuous and uneasy, and for the remainder of the evening bore with martyred patience the weighty body of Venus on creaking knees while an encircling arm of hers constricted his neck till his breath had a shortness and a variety of pitch that made it occur as the very sough of the libido.

So the marriage occurred between a disconsolately haughty goddess and a young man proud of a mystery which he possessed without understanding.

It is dramatized in the vase painting which is in the style of the decadence, and seems to be the fugitive work of some capable artist, the product of some shabbily illicit loneliness in which artists at times loosen their defiances of decency and authority. From the prevailing point of view it was a blasphemy, a despicable betrayal of the goddess who after all enjoyed the most intimate worship of the Greeks; an irreverence comparable to showing Christ compacting with a street woman, not for His business, but hers.

We must be thankful to the naughty ceramist, however, for thus adding another riposte to the brave but not invulnerable career of Venus. Whoever can laugh at the resounding pecadilloes of the gods, whoever has appreciated the exposure of Zeus as a martinet, Hera as a virago, Mars as a bully, Diana as a tomboy, Mercury as a pedant, will be grateful for this revealment of Venus reduced to the vulgarity of human matrimony.

Looking closely at the vase one is aware that the artist has put into this hidden work touches probably lacking in his public achievements. The conventions are broken. The drawings are exquisitely expressive. The blank face of Venus has after all a chagrin that is a legible cipher of her feelings. The stolidness of the young man, his security, the very nature of his agitation, which is merely his indomitable effort to make this extraordinary happening commonplace is portrayed with delicious satire.

The marriage has a sordid and dull look. There are no dancers, no games, no wine. It lacks the perhaps, by now, depraved naturalism of archaic celebrations entered into for pleasure and offspring. Here is all the bleak panoply of the "quiet wedding," the shrinking behind solemnity, the marriage as a rendezvous of two people at bay; the sense of connivance at something disgusting but necessary with a suggestion of the old pretence that it is done with the purest of motives.

It can easily be imagined that instead of being conducted with music and laughter, torches and dances to the well ministered nuptial couch they hurried away on a honeymoon where they secured that circumstantial peace and solitude which they had lost the ability of securing in the company of men.

It is hard not to sympathize with Venus. The writers and artists who suppressed this story of her melancholy degradation show a professional honor that does them credit. The tradition of an imperious goddess admired as the perfect voluptuary was worth preserving, intact.

The vase painting is specific at only one point—the actual wedding. What came before and what after must be deduced to one's own satisfaction. What explanation for instance did the young man make to his father when he brought home his great bride instead of the female slave not to cost above three hundred dinars, perhaps after arrangements had been made for a diplomatic match by which aristocracy might have been engaged to gild their gold, or by which two fecund fortunes would have been brought together. Perhaps Venus brought a dowry; the gods knew where to tap for gold.

While the aging of Venus was imperceptible the aging of the young man probably was not. We may see him becoming plural, the muscles sagging, the limbs lax, the breath tainted with stomach ferments and bad teeth. We may see him become dictatorial, while his trading victories proved sterile because they were victories not of imagination but of circumspection.

Just at what time Venus left him it is hard to say; perhaps she was with him to the end when he left her by way of that death which merely acknowledges that man has a slighter capacity for retaining life than the gods.

Probably she stepped out of his bed some night when a sleepless contemplation of his bloated body, whose conversion from compact youth into sloven middle age disgusted her, since to her keener comprehension the process of aging was visible. She might have then felt a sudden acute nausea at the folds of jowl and chins, making a brackish burial of his face. The regularity of his snore may have infuriated her. Perhaps his sensuality, the more uncontrolled because it was enlightened and apportioned by habits embittered her.

She stepped out of his bed then and perhaps for the greater derision of this lord of hers uncovered him, unbaring the profuse mushroom of his paunch, the puddles of his dimples, the laughable detours of his hams. As she swept away the fanned air fluttered upon him. He probably drew his body together closer, squirmed and finally undid his lids as part of the contorting shudder that ran manylegged upon him.

He woke, observed the vacancy at his side and attributing it with prosaic logic to physical exigency waited for her. But she did not return. Obviously this was no ordinary leaving of the room. Perhaps he shut his eyes keeping a discommoding consciousness of her absence over his mind in a dream. The sun came; but there was no rumor of her reappearance.

The first guess was that she was bedded somewhere else. Perhaps he had called his pages together and examined them severely. He certainly remembered handsome neighbors, guardsmen and strangers in the city. We can imagine him methodically grilling the women, hopping here and there, feeling his loss very keenly.

At the next festival of the gods it is likely that he indignantly reproached her at her altar, perhaps even vowing to take another wife in her place. Let us allow this shred of mirth to the goddess.

Very likely he worshipped at other altars complaining to marriage-faithful Juno of his desertion. Eventually he married again. The bed like the board had to be kept supplied; and perhaps the failure of Venus who had an infertile womb was requited by the new wife with a succession of nuggety, lolloping infants.

More probably still, the end sat down with the beginning, only the breadth of politeness between them and their parting came after the first night.

The mortified goddess went through the ceremony that we have seen painted with such rancorous realism on the vase. We may presume that the marriage was held in Memphis, just before the embarkation on the return voyage.

Venus and her young man are at the front of the ship, watching, enfolded in sweet impatience.

The lines are untied. Long poles kick at the piers; slowly, with moaning timbers, the ship is balked into the stream. The oars rip the waters; under the feet, and upon the eyes, there is the thrilling lurch of movement. The breeze rises, stroking the hair and refreshing the temples; the running sailors, singing as if they were catching it in their throats, rear up the sails, which, as they fill, stagger the ship and drive with the wind's fist in them.

Venus and her husband look back at the harbor narrowing on the sky like a watchful eye contracting. They are free, but for the day's length, the lazy yellow body of the day,

And the day ends.

The wedding supper is served; warm wine is drunk; the sailors, unbidden, sing a prothalamium; the first stars bristle; the eyes of the young man leap upon his bride.

They go together into the tall canvas booth high enough to be free from the no-doubt investigating eye of the lookout on the mast and open to the sky to make a lampbowl for the moonlight. In its glamour, before their bodies meet, they gather desire, with their usurious eyes.

The civil sea lies quiet, to bed their nuptials easily. Slow, around them the oarsman's chant, the gentle wind escorting like stately drapery.

And Venus wrings from the hard caught body contenting ecstasy.

In the morning, while dawn is still white on the horizon, Venus arises. Raw and ugly the sprawling body, the married body, scraping its breath. She laughs wearily and vaguely. At his side she lays a bar of gold; then slips noiselessly back into the sea.

BOOK V: *Byways*

NOTE ON MICHAEL ARTZIBASHEV'S

"SANINE"

Sanine, a weak and amiable young sensualist, returns to his home town in Russia after years of absence. A few days later, his sister Lida is seduced by one of Sanine's friends, an empty-headed libertine named Sarudine. Lida's friend, Sina Karsavina, a school-teacher, is in love with a tedious, disappointed revolutionary, Yourii. Love to these three men—Sanine, Sarudine, Yourii—means only physical possession.

Upon receiving a note from Sina, dispatched from a monastery hospice, Yourii expects to possess her. They meet and make love at nightfall on an orchard slope, but at the crucial moment Yourii proves ineffectual and he leaves in despair. The innocent girl, uncomprehending of his state, is filled with passion. As she strolls almost nude, in the garden of the hospice, dreaming of Yourii, Sanine sees her. Divining what must have taken place, Sanine accompanies her to the town; and at this point our selection begins.

MICHAEL ARTZIBASHEV

Sanine

The name Artzibashev (1878-1927) was legendary in the pre-war world of 1910-1914, for his best-known novel, *Sanine* (1908), had accumulated a veritable cult among the neurotic youth of Europe. Although he came of the landed gentry, Artzibashev sympathized with the Russian Revolution of 1905. Tubercular, volatile, easily discouraged, he was one of its floating adherents who, upon its failure, decided that politics was an illusion. Sanine, Artzibashev's hero, was sure of only two constants: animal enjoyments and death. The novel identified "self-expression" with unrestrained sexual life, which, together with suicide, became the twin obsessions of its devotees. Artzibashev's people also embraced anarchism because any authority, even socialist, must impose a morality. Lenin bitterly assailed this pessimism which deflected Russian youth from revolution in the direction of sensual egoism. However, when the Bolsheviks triumphed Artzibashev expected to be honored because he had assaulted "bourgeois morality." Scorned by the Bolsheviks, he became destitute and fled to Warsaw. Although he had written many novels, *Sanine* alone is still read. The ease and simplicity with which it renders corrupt persuasion partly explain the universal success of this errant masterpiece.

SANINE gently held her proffered hand in his.

"If you like, I will row you across to the other side. Why should you go all that way round?"

"Oh! no, please don't trouble," said Sina, feeling strangely shy.

"Yes, let him row you across," said little Grischka persuasively, "for there's such a lot of mud on the bank."

"Very well, then. You can go back to your mother."

"Aren't you afraid to cross the fields alone?" asked the boy.

"I will accompany you as far as the town," said Sanine.

"But what will your friends say?"

"Oh! that doesn't matter. They'll stop there till dawn. Besides, they've bored me enough as it is."

"Well, it is very kind of you, I am sure. Grischka you can go."

"Good-night, Miss," said the boy, as he noiselessly disappeared. Sina and Sanine were left there alone.

"Take my arm," he suggested, "or else you may fall."

Sina placed her arm in his, feeling a strange emotion as she touched his muscles that were hard as steel. Thus they went on in the darkness, through the woods to the river. In the wood it was pitch-dark, as if all the trees had been fused and melted in a warm, impenetrable mist.

"Oh! how dark it is!"

"That doesn't matter," whispered Sanine in her ear. His voice trembled slightly. "I like woods best at night time. It is then that man strips off his everyday mask and becomes bolder, more mysterious, more interesting."

As the sandy soil slipped beneath their feet, Sina found it difficult to save herself from falling. It was this darkness and this physical contact with a supple, masterful male to whom she had always been drawn, that now caused her most exquisite agitation. Her face glowed, her soft arm shared its warmth with that of Sanine's, and her laughter was forced and incessant.

At the foot of the hill it was less dark. Moonlight lay on the river, and a cool breeze from its broad surface fanned their cheeks. Mysteriously the wood receded in the gloom, as though it had given them into the river's charge.

"Where is your boat?"

"There it is."

The boat lay sharply defined against the bright, smooth surface of the stream. While Sanine got the oars into position, Sina, balancing herself with outstretched arms, took her place in the stern. All at once the moonlight and the luminous reflections from the water gave a fantastic radiance to her form. Pushing off the boat from land, Sanine sprang into it. With a slight grating sound the keel slid over the sand and cut the water, as the boat swam into the moonlight, leaving broad ripples in its wake.

"Let me row," said Sina, suddenly endued with strange, overmastering strength. "I love rowing."

"Very well, sit here, then," said Sanine, standing in the middle of the boat.

Again her supple form brushed lightly past him and as, with his finger-tips, she touched his proffered hand, he could glance downwards at her shapely bosom. . . .

Thus they floated down the stream. The moonlight, shining upon her pale face with its dark eyebrows and gleaming eyes, gave a certain lustre to her simple white dress. To Sanine it seemed as if they were entering a land of faerie, far removed from all men, outside the pale of human law and reason.

"What a lovely night!" exclaimed Sina.

"Lovely, isn't it?" replied Sanine in an undertone.

All at once, she burst out laughing.

"I don't know why, but I feel as if I should like to throw my hat into the water, and let down my hair," she said, yielding to a sudden impulse.

"Then do it, by all means," murmured Sanine.

But she grew ill at ease and was silent.

Under the stimulating influence of the calm, sultry, unfathomable night, her thoughts again reverted to her recent experiences. It seemed to her impossible that Sanine should not know of these, and it was just this which made her joy the more intense. Unconsciously she longed to make him aware that she was not always so gentle and modest, but that she could also be something vastly different when she threw off the mask. It was this secret longing that made her flushed and elated.

"You have known Yourii Nicolaijevitsch for a long while, haven't you?" she asked in a faltering voice, irresistibly impelled to hover above an abyss.

"No," replied Sanine. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh! I merely asked. He's a clever fellow, don't you think?"

Her tone was one of childish timidity, as if she sought to obtain something from a person far older than herself, who had the right to caress or to punish her.

Sanine smiled at her, as he said:

"Ye . . . es!"

From his voice Sina knew that he was smiling, and she blushed deeply.

"No . . . but, really he is. . . . Well, he seems to be very unhappy." Her lip quivered.

"Most likely. Unhappy he certainly is. Are you sorry for him?"

"Of course I am," said Sina with feigned *naïveté*.

"It's only natural," said Sanine, "but 'unhappy' means to you something different from what it really is. You think that a man spiritually discontented, who is for ever analysing his moods and his actions counts, not as a deplorably unhappy person, but as one of extraordinary individuality and power. Such perpetual self-analysis appears to you a fine trait which entitles that man to think himself better than all others, and deserving not merely of compassion, but of love and esteem."

"Well, what else is it, if not that?" asked Sina ingenuously.

She had never talked so much to Sanine before. That he was an original, she knew by hearsay; and she now felt agreeably perturbed at encountering so novel and interesting a personality.

Sanine laughed.

"There was a time when man lived the narrow life of a brute, not holding himself responsible for his actions nor his feelings. This was followed by the period of conscious life, and at its outset man was wont to overestimate his own sentiments and needs and desires. Here, at this stage, stands Svarogitsch. He is the last of the Mohicans, the final representative of an epoch of human evolution which has disappeared for evermore. He has absorbed, as it were, all the essences of that epoch, which have poisoned his very soul. He does not really live his life; each act, each thought is questioned. 'Have I done right?' 'Have I done wrong?' In his case this becomes almost absurd. In politics he is not sure whether it is not beneath his dignity to rank himself with others, yet, if he retires from politics, he wonders if it is not humiliating to stand aloof. There are many such persons. If Yourii Svarogitsch forms an exception, it is solely on account of his superior intelligence."

"I do not quite understand you," began Sina timidly. "You speak of Yourii Nicolaijevitsch as if he himself were to blame for not being other than what he is. If life fails to satisfy a man, then that man stands above life."

"Man cannot be above life," replied Sanine, "for he himself is but a fraction of it. He may be dissatisfied, but the cause for such discontent lies in himself. He either cannot or dare not take from life's treasures enough for his actual needs. There are people who spend their lives in a prison. Others are afraid to escape from it, like some captive bird that fears to fly away when set free. . . . The body and spirit of man form one complete harmonious whole, disturbed only by the dread approach of death. But it is we ourselves who disturb such harmony by our own distorted conception of life. We have branded as bestial our physical desires; we have become ashamed of them; we have shrouded them in degrading forms and trammels. Those of us who by nature are weak, do not notice this, but drag on through life in chains, while those who are crippled by a false conception of life, it is they who are the martyrs. The pent-up forces crave an outlet; the body pines for joy, and suffers torment through its own impotence. Their life is one of perpetual discord and uncertainty, and they catch at any straw that might help them to a newer theory of morals, till at last so melancholy do they become that they are afraid to live, afraid to feel."

"Yes, yes," was Sina's vigorous assent.

A host of new thoughts invaded her mind. As with shining eyes she glanced round, the splendour of the night, the beauty of the calm river and of the dreaming woods in moonlight seemed to penetrate her whole being. Again she was possessed by that vague longing for sheer dominant strength that should yield her delight.

"My dream is always of some golden age," continued Sanine, "when nothing shall stand between man and his happiness, and when, fearless and free, he can give himself up to all attainable enjoyments."

"Yes, but how is he to do that? By a return to barbarism?"

"No. The epoch when man lived like a brute was a miserable, barbarous one, and our own epoch, in which the body, dominated by the mind, is kept under and set in the background lacks sense and vigour. But humanity has not lived in vain. It has created new conditions of life which give no scope either for grossness or asceticism."

"Yes, but what of love? Does not that impose obligations upon us?" asked Sina hurriedly.

"No. If love imposes grievous obligations, it is through jealousy, and jealousy is the outcome of slavery. In any form slavery causes harm. Men should enjoy what love can give them fearlessly and without restrictions. If this were so, love would be infinitely richer and more varied in all its forms, and more influenced by chance and opportunity."

"I hadn't the least fear just now," was Sina's proud reflection. She suddenly looked at Sanine, feeling as if this were her first sight of him. There he sat, facing her, in the stern, a fine figure of a man; dark-eyed, broad-shouldered, intensely virile.

"What a handsome fellow!" she thought. A whole world of unknown forces and emotions lay before her. Should she enter that world? She smiled at her now curiosity, trembling all over, Sanine must have guessed what was passing in her mind. His breath came quicker, almost in gasps.

In passing through a narrow part of the stream, the oars caught in the trailing foliage and slipped from Sina's hands.

"I can't get along here, it's so narrow," she said timidly. Her voice sounded gentle and musical as the rippling of the stream.

Sanine stood up, and moved towards her.

"What is it?" she asked in alarm.

"It's all right, I am only going to . . ."

Sina rose in her turn, and attempted to get to the rudder.

The boat rocked so violently that she well nigh lost her balance, and involuntarily she caught hold of Sanine, after falling almost into his arms. At that moment, almost unconsciously, and never believing it possible, she gently prolonged their contact. It was this touch of her that in a moment fired his blood, while she, sensible of his ardour, irresistibly responded thereto.

"Ah!" exclaimed Sanine, in surprise and delight.

He embraced her passionately, forcing her backwards, so that her hat fell off.

The boat rocked with greater violence, as invisible wavelets dashed against the shore.

"What are you doing?" she cried, in a faint voice. "Let me go! For heaven's sake! . . . What are you doing? . . ."

She struggled to free herself from those arms of steel, but Sanine crushed her firm bosom closer, closer to his own, till such barriers as there had been between them ceased to exist.

Around them, only darkness; the moist odour of the river and the reeds; an atmosphere now hot, now cold; profound silence. Suddenly, unaccountably, she lost all power of volition and of thought; her limbs relaxed, and she surrendered to another's will.

Recovering herself at last, she perceived the bright image of the moon in the dark water, and Sanine's face bending over her with glittering eyes. She felt that his arms were wound tightly round her, and that one of the oars was chafing her knee.

Then she began to weep gently, persistently, without freeing herself from Sanine's embrace.

Her tears were for that which was irretrievable. Fear and pity for herself, and fondness for him made her weep. Sanine lifted her up and set her on his knee. She meekly submitted like some sorrowful child. As in a dream she could hear him gently comforting her in a tender, grateful voice.

"I shall drown myself." The thought seemed an answer to a third person's stern question, "What have you done, and what will you do now?"

"What shall I do now?" she asked aloud.

"We will see," replied Sanine.

She tried to slip off his knees, but he held her fast, so she remained there, thinking it strange that she could feel for him neither hatred nor disgust.

"It doesn't matter what happens, now," she said to herself, yet a secret physical curiosity prompted her to wonder what this strong man, a stranger, and yet so close a friend, would do with her.

After a while, he took the oars, and she reclined beside him, her eyes half-closed, and trembling every time that his hand in rowing moved close to her bosom. As the boat with a grating sound touched the shore, Sina opened her eyes. She saw fields, and water, and white mist, and the moon like a pale phantom ready to flee at dawn. It was now daybreak and a cool breeze was blowing.

"Shall I go with you?" asked Sanine gently.

"No. I'd rather go alone," she replied.

Sanine lifted her out of the boat. It was a joy to him to do this, for he felt that he loved her, and was grateful to her. As he put her down on the shore after embracing her fondly, she stumbled.

"Oh! you beauty!" exclaimed Sanine, in a voice full of passion and tenderness and pity.

She smiled in unconscious pride. Sanine took hold of her hands, and drew her to him.

"Kiss me!"

"It doesn't matter; nothing matters now," she thought, as she gave him a long, passionate kiss on his lips.

"Good-bye," she murmured, scarcely knowing what she said.

"Don't be angry with me, darling," pleaded Sanine.

As she crossed the dyke, staggering as she went, and tripping over her dress, Sanine watched her with sorrowful eyes. It grieved him to think of all the needless suffering that was in store for her and which, as he foresaw, she had not the strength to set aside.

Slowly her figure moved forward to meet the dawn, and it soon vanished in the white mist.

When he could no longer see her, Sanine leapt into the boat, and by a few powerful strokes lashed the water to foam. In mid-stream, as the dense morning mists rose round him, Sanine dropped the oars, stood erect in the boat and uttered a great shout of joy. And the woods and the mists, as if alive, responded to his cry.

As though stunned by a blow, Sina at once fell asleep, but woke early, feeling utterly broken, and cold as a corpse. Her despair had never slumbered, and for no single moment could she forget that which had been done. In mute dejection she scrutinized every detail of her room, as if to discover what since yesterday had suffered change. Yet, from its corner, touched by morning light, the *ikon* looked down at her in friendly wise. The windows, the floor, the furniture were unaltered, and on the pillows of the adjoining bed lay the fair head of Dubova who was still fast asleep. All was exactly the same as usual; only the crumpled dress flung carelessly across a chair told its tale. The flush on her face at waking soon gave place to an ashen pallor that was heightened by her coal-black eyebrows. With the awful clearness of an overwrought brain she rehearsed her experiences of the last few hours. She saw herself walking through silent streets at sunrise and hostile windows seemed watching her, while the few persons she met turned round to look at her. On she went in the dawn-light, hampered by her long skirts, and holding a little green plush bag, much as some criminal might stagger homewards. The past night was to her as a night of delirium. Something mad and strange and overwhelming had happened, yet how or why she knew not. To have flung all shame aside, to have forgotten her love for another man, it was this that to her appeared incomprehensible.

Jaded and sick at heart, she rose, and noiselessly began to dress, fearful lest Dubova should awake. Then she sat at the window, gazing anxiously at the green and yellow foliage in the garden. Thoughts whirled in her brain, thoughts hazy and confused as smoke driven by the wind. Suddenly Dubova awoke.

"What? Up already? How extraordinary!" she exclaimed.

When Sina returned in the early morning, her friend had only drowsily asked, "How did you get in such a mess?" and then had fallen asleep again. Now that she noticed that something was wrong, she hurried across to Sina, barefooted, and in her night-dress.

"What's the matter? Are you ill?" she asked sympathetically, as might an elder sister.

Sina winced, as beneath a blow, yet, with a smile on her rosy lips, she replied in a tone of forced gaiety:

"Oh! dear no! Only, I hardly slept at all last night."

Thus was the first lie spoken that converted all her frank, proud maidenhood to a memory. In its place there was now something false and sullied. While Dubova was dressing herself, Sina glanced furtively at her from time to time. Her friend seemed to her bright and pure, and she herself as repulsive as a crushed reptile. So powerful was this impression, that even the very part of the room where Dubova stood appeared full of sunshine, while her own corner was steeped in gloom. Sina remembered how she had always thought herself purer and more beautiful than her friend, and the change that had come caused her intense anguish.

Yet all this lay hidden deep in her heart, and outwardly she was perfectly calm; indeed, almost gay. She put on a pretty dark-blue dress, and, taking her hat and sunshade, walked to school in her usual buoyant way, where she remained until noon, and then returned home.

In the street she met Lida Sanina. They both stood there in the sunlight, graceful, young, and pretty, as with smiles on their lips they talked of trifling things. Lida felt morbidly hostile towards Sina, happy and free from care as she imagined her to be, while the latter envied Lida her liberty and her pleasant, easy life. Each believed herself to be the victim of cruel injustice.

"I am surely better than she is. Why is she so happy, and why must I suffer?" In both their minds this thought was uppermost.

After lunch, Sina took a book and sat near the window, listlessly gazing at the garden that was still touched with the splendour of the dying summer. The emotional crisis had passed, and now her mood was one of apathy and indifference.

"Ah! Well, it's all over with me now," she kept repeating. "I'd better die."

Sina saw Sanine before he noticed her. Tall and calm, he crossed the garden, thrusting aside the branches as if to greet them by his touch. Leaning back in her chair, and pressing the book against her bosom, she watched him, wild-eyed, as he slowly approached the window.

"Good day," he said, holding out his hand.

Before she could rise or recover from her amazement he repeated in a gentle, caressing tone.

"Good morning to you."

Sina felt utterly powerless. She only murmured:

"Good morning."

Sanine leant on the window-sill and said:

"Do come out into the garden for a little while and have a talk."

Sina got up, swayed by a strange force that robbed her of her will.

"I'll wait for you there," added Sanine.

She merely nodded.

As he strolled back to the garden Sina was afraid to look at him. For some seconds she remained motionless, with her hands clasped, and then suddenly went out, holding up her dress so as to walk more easily.

Sunlight touched the bright-hued autumn foliage; and the garden seemed steeped in a golden haze. As Sina hastened towards him, Sanine was standing at some distance in the middle of the path. His smile troubled her. He took her hand, and, sitting on the trunk of a tree, gently drew her on to his lap.

"I am not sure," he began, "that I ought to have come here to see you, for you may think that I have treated you very badly. But I could not stay away. I wanted to explain things, so that you might not utterly hate and loathe me. After all . . . what else could I do? How was I to resist? There came a moment when I felt that the last barrier between us had fallen, and that, if I missed this moment of my life, it would never again be mine. You're so beautiful, so young . . ."

Sina was mute. Her soft, transparent ear, half-hidden by her hair, became rosy, and her long eyelashes quivered.

"You're miserable, now, and yesterday, how beautiful it all was," he said. "Sorrows only exist because man has set a price upon his own happiness. If our way of living were different, last night would remain in our memory as one of life's most beautiful and precious experiences."

"Yes, if . . ." she said mechanically. Then, all at once, much to her own surprise, she smiled. And as sunrise, and the song of birds, and the sound of whispering reeds, so this smile seemed to cheer her spirit. Yet it was but for a moment.

All at once she saw her whole future life before her, a broken life of sorrow and shame. The prospect was so horrible that it roused hatred.

"Go away! Leave me!" she said sharply. Her teeth were clenched and her face wore a hard, vindictive expression as she rose to her feet.

Sanine pitied her. For a moment he was moved to offer her his name and his protection, yet something held him back. He felt that such amends would be too mean.

"Ah! well," he thought, "life must just take its course."

"I know that you are in love with Yourii Svarogitsch," he began. "Perhaps it is that which grieves you most?"

"I am in love with no one," murmured Sina, clasping her hands convulsively.

"Don't bear me any ill-will," pleaded Sanine. "You're just as beautiful as ever you were, and the same happiness that you gave to me, you will give to him you love—far more, indeed, far more. I wish you from my heart all possible joy, and I shall always picture you to myself as I saw you last night. Good-bye . . . and, if ever you need me, send for me. If I could . . . I would give my life for you."

Sina looked at him, and was silent, stirred by strange pity.

"It may all come right, who knows?" she thought, and for a moment matters did not seem so dreadful. They gazed into each other's eyes steadfastly, knowing that in their hearts they held a secret which no one would ever discover, and the memory of which would always be bright.

"Well, good-bye," said Sina, in a gentle, girlish voice.

Sanine looked radiant with pleasure. She held out her hand, and they kissed, simply, affectionately, like brother and sister.

Sina accompanied Sanine as far as the garden-gate and sorrowfully watched him go. Then she went back to the garden, and lay down on the scented grass that waved and rustled round her. She shut her eyes, thinking of all that had happened, and wondering whether she ought to tell Yourii or not.

"No, no," she said to herself, "I won't think anymore about it. Some things are best forgotten. . . ."

PAUL MORAND

The Six-Day Race

Born in 1888 of a French family long settled in Russia, Paul Morand is one of the few Frenchmen who are at home everywhere. Sophisticated, ultra-modern, a toyer with Futurist poetry, the chameleon of social environments, he is graphic in portraying borderline characters and in mixing poster colors with epigrams. He is the snob let loose among the naifs. Morand's women are primitives: their gloss differs with social station or nationality, but they all desire material goods and sensual satisfactions. He so speeds events that the intoxicated reader imagines that he has assimilated a complete culture. Morand's milieus are those of the idle rich, the rotten rich, the rotten poor; dance-halls, luxury hotels, bars, sleeping cars, transatlantics, drugs, and direct passions. Woman is a profiteer living off man's efforts, whether she be prostitute, cadger, wife, or even competitor in business or the arts. *Open All Night* (1923) involves no conflicts. His people follow their biological line. He dazzles us with images and aphorisms and we are too involved to see that he does not really think. Morand became a leading diplomat in the Pétain government.

SHE had been there for three nights running. She was always alone except for the dances which she never missed, but which she only danced with professional dancers or with girl friends. If anyone else asked her for a dance she refused; she refused me also, although I went there only to see her and she knew it. It was not so much her milk-white back, her jet bead dress which was a shimmering black cascade, or her excess of onyx jewelry, her long narrow eyes meeting her side-locks and looking like onyxes themselves; it was rather her flat nose, the rise and fall of her bosom, her beautiful Jewish complexion like a sulphur-dusted vine, the odd fact of her being alone. And in addition to this her curious manœuverings several times each evening towards the washroom and the telephone.

She spent her money on drinks, not on tips for the head waiter. She went from short drinks to long ones. Between the hours of midnight and three o'clock on this third evening these consisted of two glasses of champagne, six anisettes and a small decanter of brandy, to say nothing of tooth-picks and green almonds.

She went upstairs to the telephone with me behind her.

"Léa speaking. Is your milk good? Everything going on all right? . . . No stitch or anything? Has he eaten yet? Ah . . . ? From the bottle?"

We seemed to know each other better in the setting of this waterless washroom polluted by dead flowers, cigarette ends, broken dolls, cocaine, assignations and *poudre Rachel.* She examined herself pitilessly in the mirror beneath the lamp, so closely that she kissed her own lips. On the mist of the breath she left there I inscribed my heart. She shrugged a shoulder.

She was wearing a bodice on which numerous Chinese officials in silver thread were discussing affairs of state on the threshold of numerous pagodas.

"Any of these to let?" I enquired placing my finger on the door of the pagoda at each place where the pattern repeated it on her chest. She drew herself up with dignity.

"Do you often get that way?"

The attendant, who was wiping her hands on an overcoat, turned round and pleaded for me.

"Yes, you look like a gentleman," said Léa, "but when I'm tight I'm always wrong."

From the balcony, above the up-pointing bows of the fiddlers, one saw a picture of niggers in seaside clothes chewing at nothing and quaking with a kind of religious ague. Twisted copper irises like offshoots of the "metro" illuminated views of the Seine, no longer spoilt by factories, but steeped in romance and in which nude ladies were bathing timidly. Clasped body to body in the waltzing-trough the dancers surged along. The hall emitted an aroma of oxo, addled egg, arm-pit and the strains of *un jour viendra.*

"Where do you live?" I asked. "I love you."

"Go on! You're kidding. Or d'you mean it?"

"Both together, as usual."

She went on inevitably:

"I seem to have seen you before somewhere."

"You are my very sister," I said kissing her dress, "and I cannot live without you."

I must have seemed to her brazen, contemptible and utterly devoid of character. She disengaged herself.

"You seem in an awful hurry."

"I'm not really, but I always do everything quickly and badly because I'm so afraid of ceasing to want to do it too soon."

"Well, it's nearly two o'clock. I've got to clear off now."

"Not before you've told me why you disappear every other moment. Are you selling *it?*"

She opened her eyes wide like saucers.

"Not likely," she replied, "do you think I want five years?"

"Well then, what?"

"It's to get the latest news of my boy friend who's working."

"What does your friend do?"

"He's a long-distance cyclist, a six-day-man . . .

"He's in a six-day race, see? You've never heard of Petitmathieu? Where on earth do you come from?"

With a sweep of her arm she enveloped herself in the skins of ninety-eight white rabbits.

"I told my coachman not to wait. Get me a taxi. Tell him to go toward Grenelle."

Along the banks of the winding Seine the taxi clock kept beating like a fevered pulse. Lamps like the husks of pink pearls along the girl's dry cough, bursts of affection, resolutions on my part not to have any more nonsense after leaving the Champ-de-Mars, carts full of blue cabbages.

"I love cabs," I said. "We ought to take one of these cabs and live in it for months until we get to know its lamps, its springs, its tires by heart. To know, *for instance,* that the blinds of the Urbaine cabs only pull down half way and that it is nice to be behind a slow horse when Paris seethes beneath its cloak of mist and one Cours-la-Reine, phosphorescent sewer outfalls, does that which depopulates the world. . . ."

Grenelle. The river sweeps beneath the yoke of the bridge. Red lights on the lovers' parapet, green ones on the business men's. Fourteen francs twenty-five centimes on the clock.

I enquire anxiously:

"Don't you live in Paris?"

"Idiot," she replies. "Who said anything about where I live? I am going to the Winter velodrome for the two o'clock stakes."

* * * * * * *

An underground passage led to the weighing room. The cheap carpet was rippled by draughts. When we were half way through there was a terrific thundering overhead. The boards groaned. Then we entered a wooden circus filled to its glass roof with a fog cut by luminous cones. Under enamelled shades powerful electric lamps followed the track. Léa stood imperially on tiptoe.

"Look: yellow and black . . . The Wasps . . . the team of 'aces.'

That's Van den Hoven racing now. They're going to wake Petitmathieu up for the two o'clock stakes."

Shrill whistles cut through the air. Then four thousand yells broke out, yells that seemed to burst from the depths of the throat, such as one only gets from a Parisian crowd.

The Australian tried to forge ahead. The sprinting began. Above the billboards I saw the drawn features and eager eyes of the populace. A band broke out. Latrich was singing. *"Hardi coco!"* was taken up in chorus. This livened matters up. The sixteen competitors passed by every twenty seconds in a compact body, keeping a watchful eye on each other.

The weighing room occupied one end of the velodrome. At each end the track turned and there it gradually banked until it was as steep as a wall which the racers in their impetus climbed almost up to the words: "THE MOST RELIABLE PETROL." The score board began to show signs of life. Figures came down and others went up.

"4th night, 85th hour. 2,300 kilometres 650 metres."

"Look, there he is!" said Léa, "there's my darling getting on to his machine."

So far Petitmathieu was still swinging along easily by himself, with his curled hair, his dirty neck and his eyes as treacherous as a cat's.

"Isn't he a lamb, considering it's his fourth night, the dear boy!"

The nickelled megaphone announced two stakes of a hundred francs each.

"Let's go closer, things are becoming more exciting. Look, he has seen us."

He had seen me. I was holding Léa's hand. We exchanged a look of hatred as man to man.

The noise seemed to echo in spirals that became shorter at every turn. At each bell the sixteen men seemed to shoot round the corners and be hurled into the straight again by the steep twisted turns.

"Léa," I murmured, "I wish we were 'cradled in delight,' as that old puritan Agrippa d'Aubigné says. What do you like for breakfast?"

The mob was making an inhuman din.

"You're balmy," she answered. "Go on the spree when that darling is going round and round on that track there? Not much. A fine sort of thing I'd be if I thought of anything but him during these six days and six nights."

At the finish they pounced on the stakes like carp on a crumb, the woolly Italian, the Swiss giant, the Corsican N. C. O.'s and all the negroes amongst the fair Flemings.

"It's all over. The Australian's won. Just like our luck! Petitmathieu let himself be pocketed," said Léa. "He's going to get off; let's go and see him, the dear!"

The competitors' quarters had sprung up at the short turn of the track. Each man had his own wooden cubicle containing a curtained cot. In a slot above one of these was written: "VELOX STAND. PETITMATHIEU—VAN DEN HOVEN TEAM." A searchlight played on the innermost recesses of the cubicles so that the crowd should not miss a single action of its favourites, even during their rest. The attendants dressed in white hospital uniform bustled about with a clinking of plates amongst the petrol and grease stains, mixing embracations with eggs and camphor on garden chairs. Dismantled machines, bicycle frames, rubber washers, pieces of black cottonwool soaking in basins. Petitmathieu was lying stretched on his back, his hands behind his head, resigning his hairy and heavily veined legs to the masseur who was patting them to make them limber.

"Do let me kiss him, Bibendum," said Léa to the manager.

Petitmathieu opened an eye.

"That's all right," he said crossly, pushing her away. "Let him get on with his job."

"You haven't shaved, you ugly old thing."

"Oh! Shut up!"

Silence fell. The racers passed by at the rail, their shadows whisking across the awning above the cubicles. Their naked legs went round like mechanical toys. Van den Hoven called out as he passed:

"Buck up! To-morrow night's nearly here."

I made Petitmathieu's acquaintance, but he seemed to ignore my presence entirely. He was grumbling to himself. That would teach him to get up again for a bloody stake. And only a hundred franc one at that. Stingy brutes. A lot of touts who came there with their tarts, that is, if they didn't come to steal other people's girls!

His thighs were now like wet ivory.

"Petitmathieu! Stand up there!" the mob cried relentlessly from above the Peugeot lions. But he made a sign with his hand that he had had enough.

The soiled mechanics in khaki shirts with their five days' beard were binding handlebars with pitched string, making bundles of wheels to be examined, tightening nuts.

Petitmathieu was feeling uncomfortable.

"My stomach, when are you going to do my stomach?"

The masseur pulled down the elastic belt of Petitmathieu's shorts. Below his navel was written "4th *Zouave Regiment. 1st Company*" with the motto *"all I can get."* He rubbed him with the palm of his hand.

"Put some talcum powder on my thighs."

Those who had just been relieved by their team mates got off their machines for two hours' sleep. Their managers stopped them by grasping their saddles and handlebars, undid the straps fastening their feet to the pedals and carried their charges with tender care towards their beds.

Then everything settled down for the night. In spite of the noise some of the competitors were snoring. Others got up and ragged about from bed to bed like in a barrack-room. One heard the noise of bicycle pumps, followed by that of compressed air whistling through valves.

Petitmathieu remained on his back like a corpse, his hands with their square black nails and thick aluminum rings crossed on his chest. Léa sat herself at his feet and rouged her cheeks. I moved away.

From behind the partition I heard Petitmathieu talking:

"All the same, I told you to keep away from Maxim's during the race."

Léa explained that she was too nervous to stay at home by herself. She couldn't sleep. She only thought of him and of his beautiful legs working away so hard, of his beloved face with his black curly hair, his Charlie Chaplin moustache, his square jaw, his eyes fixed on the back-wheel of the pacer, his scarlet sweater fastened at the neck by mother of pearl buttons. It wasn't the first time she had been tested. Hadn't she simply *lived* at the end of a telegraph wire all the time he was grinding round at Madison Square Garden the year before?

Crushed beneath the weight of their 95 hours of work and 2652 kilometres 580 metres of distance the competitors were going round in Indian file to the silvery trill of bearing-balls, a negro leading the way. Some of them had put on goggles. Now and then someone had a puncture or a chain broke. Hurriedly his sleeping comrade was awakened and seated forcibly on the saddle; still asleep he attached himself to the others. The round became monotonous as always at the end of those nights which no one ever dreams of leaving except in the case of collapse. A silence weighing tons descended on the assembly.

Léa rejoined me in the enclosure.

"Beat it, or he won't be able to sleep. He's watching us all the time. It drives him crazy to know I'm with someone and that he can't leave his bunk. He'll get so tired he'll lose his nerve.

"It isn't that he's got it in for you, he even thinks you're rather a sport, if a little half-baked," she went on. "But he's got it in for me. He won't let me go to Maxim's or dance. He's awfully touchy."

I learnt that Petitmathieu only allowed her to go to the Excelsior, the racers' café, to write letters and see people. There at any rate he knew what was going on, from his pals and from the waiters.

In vain I promised her a surprise, presents, complete discretion; I could not persuade Léa to come back with me. I only got her permission to meet her next day at the apéritif hour. I needed her. She had such sweet plump curves and her harsh voice, a delight in itself, enchanted me. All that soft skin smoothed by beauty creams, washed with ointments, all those jewels, all her hidden charms, her dyes, drugs and tenderness, were all at the disposition of those strong, hairy, piston-like legs now resting, rolled so carefully in their blankets. The whole thing was an illogical and yet natural game into which I was intruding as a third party and which amazed and irritated me but at the same time was the only thing that gave me the strength to bear that cruel moment in which the night-hawk has to confess himself beaten.

Sunset. Grenadine. The hour flowed smoothly. A feeling of peace crept over everything in spite of the fieriness of my drink. I was waiting for Léa at the Brasserie de la Port-Maillot. She came down from Montmartre in a hired brougham, wearing an otter coat, and drank long drinks.

"This reminds me of when I first knew Petitmathieu. I rented a room by the month in the Rue des Acacias."

My first words were to ask her for news of the race.

"A little tired," she said. "Back ache. And colic. But the other leading team has it too. The Australian is all in. Water on the knee coming on. He's quit. They've hardly moved all the morning; they're just crawling along."

"And Van den Hoven?"

"Pedals like a demon all the time. But he has no head for team work. It's Bibendum and Petitmathieu who come out strong when something's got to be done."

I began to realize that my pleasure at seeing Léa again was not an unmixed one. I loved her plebeian hands, her eyelids the colour of a fifty-franc note . . . that cold heart which warmed as if by magic to physical strength, but I could not forget the struggle going on round and round down there.

Drawn up by the curb the cars of the spectators exhausted the catalogue of strange shapes. There were torpedoes, yachts, bathtubs, airships, whilst some of them were merely hastily covered with a champagne case. Their owners were those highly-polished and beautiful young men who stand for hours behind plate-glass windows in the avenue des Champs-Elysées in tiled show-rooms containing nothing but a palm, a Persian prayer-rug and a nickelled chassis. They always remind me of the ladies sitting in their windows in the low quarters of Amsterdam.

The waiters hurried about between the tables, holding a black-coloured apéritif between each finger. Mechanics in overalls, cyclists with tires wrapped round their bodies, pugilists leaving Cuny's. Each man greeted his friends with a gesture characteristic of his occupation. Bantam weights gave each other hearty right hooks in the ribs, footballers slapped each other on the legs.

Léa was still pretty and elusive. The only thing which roused her at all was a yellow and black scarf, the colours of the team, which I had bought specially for her. She wore a large white felt hat trimmed with a single vulture's feather and drop ear-rings which reminded me of the Far West and of the ladies who shoot over their shoulders, aiming in a mirror. I told her this. I also told her that I was not a man like Petitmathieu with "All I can get" for motto, and that I had never wanted anything for six days and six nights in my life, that the doctor forbade me cold baths, that in matters of daily life I had always done "the correct thing" to a dreadful extent, that my heart was an object entirely distinct from myself and that very thin women with curly hair were not without their charm.

On the other hand she was enthralled when she discovered that I knew the Italian lakes and the author of Tipperary and that I had some autographs of Marshal Joffre. I even boasted of having in my studio an exact replica of an Arab chief's tent and of being able to play Tartini's "Devil's Sonata" on the violin.

She looked at me:

"I say, you're not a bit like other people, are you?"

"Thank you, Léa. No one but a woman would say a thing like that; and yet it is above all with women that one is like everybody else."

The motoring-school near by emitted a fœtid stench. In the distance a hunt could be heard in progress just beyond the fortifications, mixed with the melancholy hooting of the siren in the shadows of the scenic railway at Luna Park which is like the hull of a huge steamer abandoned on the stocks of a bankrupt shipbuilder.

* * * * * * *

I had to admit to myself with some annoyance on arriving at the racetrack that evening after a dull day, that I was going there just as much for the race as for Léa; nothing had changed on the announcements. But suddenly there was an uproar. The six racers were going round in a coloured ribbon in which were mixed green, yellow, white, scarlet and orange. By their nimble pedaling they devoured the track worn smooth by their tires, to the clang of the bell marking their progress.

Petitmathieu was in the saddle; he saw me and gave me a smile of recognition with his left eyelid. Then, towards the 3421st kilometre in the 131st hour, a spurt began. The balconies groaned beneath the weight of the public surprised during their supper, their mouths full of food.

The negro, his nose glued to his handlebars, went off like an arrow, and getting half a lap ahead, kept his lead. There was instant confusion. Those who were suffering from the effects of a fall or from aching backs and those whose wheels were buckled were left behind one by one and were soon caught up again. Led by Petitmathieu, the competitors threw themselves in the wake of the negro who began to weaken and look round; his team-mate was asleep and did not come; the crowd yelled to him to come to the rescue.

"Hey, cocky! Boot-face! Get mounted!"

A waiter let a glass of beer fall from the first tier. The Hall shook beneath the howls, the rattles and the whistles until suddenly the negro straightened his back, brought his hands to the centre of his handlebars and, coasting on his momentum, showed that he had had enough.

I made for the competitors' quarters. Petitmathieu began to dine heartily. Washed, shaved, a fine-looking lad in his cashmere dressing-gown, he was gnawing away at a cutlet he held in his hand. Seated on the edge of the bed, Léa watched him chew, her eyes moist and submissive. He offered me a bowl of champagne and some whisked eggs in a tin that had once held rubber solution.

I was proud of my acquaintance with this athlete whom the programme called "A Caruso of the pedal." I found myself admiring his supple legs, his faultless knees. I assured him of my warm support and spurred him on.

"I led the pack," he explained, simply. "When that happened it didn't take long to break the nigger's heart. Team work is everything."

Petitmathieu amazed me most by his calm, dining peacefully like an ordinary citizen a few minutes after that hue and cry, surrounded now by his assiduous attendants, his adoring mate beside him, propped up by cushions, with a screen decorated with wistaria behind him which gave him the appearance of being in his home.

Léa held one of his fingers tenderly and said nothing. I loved them both equally. I told them so.

We clinked glasses. Léa proposed the following toast:

To our health which is dear to us all,
And which is so necessary to us,

Because with health we can earn money,
And with money we can buy sugar,
And with sugar we can catch flies.

Petitmathieu explained his happiness to me: "She's a regular scream. But a good girl for all that. And always ready with tempting dishes, bandages and anything else that's wanted. She's got a coachman by the month who plays the trumpet and knows all about mushrooms. Clever isn't the word for her, and what a talker! Makes a party go like anything. Between ourselves, a skin with veins in it like rivers on a map, a mane of hair down to her heels, none of those three blobs of hair women wear nowadays and which don't keep a comb busy. And what breasts! cool as an icehouse; and then going about things painstakingly while only putting half her back into it; washes her teeth after every meal, eats asparagus with special tongs and never wears stays.

"Wait till you know her a bit better," he said, "and you'll see what I mean."

The orchestra was playing a boston like the Russian mountains. From exquisite heights one was cast into the languorous valleys of the refrains. Some comedians with powdered chins came in after the theatre. They wanted to dance but the mob treated them as good-for-nothings, braggarts, sausage-eaters.

I left Petitmathieu in high spirits, holding his audience, pretending to be in bed with Léa in his cubicle.

I had to give my promise that I would be back the next day for the supreme effort and that I would stay there all night.

Sixth night, 138th hour, 3864 kilometres, 570 metres. The same monotonous spectacle. They slept as they went round, like weary squirrels. One of them touched the wheel in front and fell, dragging the others with him. One heard shouts in English, Turkish oaths, a desultory clamour caused by someone giving up the race. Then the round began again.

It was very late. The night sprints were over. The competitors circled round, their hands reversed to rest their wrists and wrapped in thick woolen shawls against the night cold.

Petitmathieu was resting in his cubicle. Van den Hoven was carrying out the humble toil of the night, leaving to his team mate the brilliant work of the last hours which was about to begin. I offered to lend a hand to Bibendum whose face was as drawn by weariness as though distorted in a spoon. In our shirt sleeves we put an inner tube into a bucket of water to find the leak in it. Léa found me doing this and reproached me for neglecting her. I shrugged my shoulders.

Many of the spectators were spending the night there. Children were sleeping lying on pink or yellow sporting papers. Orderlies from the Ecole Militaire, private chauffeurs, workmen from les Moulineaux on their way to their factories, clerks on their way to their offices, provincial couples in mourning, yawned, kept themselves awake by playing cards and opened bottles with a pop.

"Ugéne," said someone, "pass me the atomizer."

Wrapping ourselves in blankets, our heads on sacking, we waited side by side for the dawn. Léa took my hand in hers.

"What small bones you've got. I feel I'm going to get into trouble over you," she said, like the heroine of a penny novelette. Her voice was soft and silky. "You're just the opposite of a record-breaker. You're more like a priest or a comic singer. You don't say much but you're full of life. And besides, I've always longed to be interested in someone whose health wasn't very good. A young artist, for instance, with his shirt open at the neck, veins much too blue and a fine pointed beard . . . Take me."

"Nothing," I replied, "could have afforded me greater pleasure, even as late as yesterday. And perhaps to-morrow again. But to-day my whole heart is here; I am a prey to one thought only, and that is that Petitmathieu should win. I no longer belong to myself; nor do you; we have become part of the velodrome, an incident in the race, waiting for victory. A few hours more and just think of the click of the cameras, the crowd, the special editions of the papers, the banquet with its flags and deputies. We will ourselves have contributed in our own small way to our winner getting all this."

"Dearest," said Léa, annoyed, "you're a good boy. That's nice. It's sweet of you. I love you more for that."

Disappointment turned down the corners of her mouth.

She waited. She closed her eyes. Then half dreaming she said:

"I don't know how Petitmathieu will take this."

On our right, above the advertisement of Éternol varnish, through the glass roof the desolate dawn appeared, heralded by a pianola. I sang:

Amidst the tumbled sheets at break of day,
While cock to hoarse-voiced cock his greeting cries,
Lovers are parted, love, flowers cast away,
And while you sleep, sweet love, my passion dies. . . .

NOTE ON HEINRICH MANN'S

"THE LAND OF COCKAIGNE"

Andrew Zumsee leaves his small provincial German city for Berlin to seek his fortune. Unscrupulous, devious, and decorative, he uses women to advance himself. When he makes the acquaintance of the King of the Stock Exchange, Turckheimer, he joins the circle and as a parasite amasses a sudden, large fortune. Zumsee indulges his luxurious tastes. He makes love to Turckheimer's mistress, Adelheid, and to the wife of Pimbusch, another notable.

HEINRICH MANN

The Land of Cockaigne

Unlike his younger brother Thomas, Heinrich Mann from youth much preferred the Latin world to the Germanic; and he has torn the veil from German society to reveal its brutish face. *The Land of Cockaigne* (definitive version, 1905) sounded the trumpet against the illusions of Kaiserist Germany. It laid bare the corruption beneath the façade of honor, the anarchy of covetousness beneath the discipline, and the sexual degeneracy beneath the piety. Heinrich Mann (born 1871) has openly followed the pattern of Maupassant's *Bel Ami,* but he has transferred the theme to apply to modern capitalism. His books are numerous. Among them are *The Blue Angel,* which became a successful motion picture, and the *Patrioteer,* which was a factor in overthrowing the Kaiserist régime. Heinrich Mann's literary credo is clearly implied in his epic of *Henry of Navarre,* his hero: never to expose any social evil without substituting a realizable ideal.

[ADELHEID]

QUITE often, the young man was tempted to show his beloved the door. But he reasoned as follows: "If she wants to irritate me, it's her business. I should worry. I'm not taking her for her own sake, but for the sake of certain social advantages. Everybody in the Land of Cockaigne knows that I have Türkheimer's mistress. Personally, I don't like her. But she's necessary to my education as a man of the world. Getting Adelheid was too easy. I could get her any time I wanted. But I have to conquer this thin, malicious, idiotic creature over again every day. And what I conquer isn't worth conquering. But it belongs to Türkheimer! It is my duty to enjoy it, just because it is so lacking in charm. That," he thought, "is the higher corruption."

He was sacrificing his inclinations to his clearly recognized duty. At times, his native instincts rose up. A peasant-like desire for an immensity of flesh overcame him. Then he forced himself to be all the colder toward Adelheid.

These rooms had been the self-created garment of her love. She had hoped for a renewed honeymoon in Lützow Street. She had torn her lover away from his bourgeois surrounding, from the claws of common people, from every kind of sacrilege by vulgar things. She had established him in this gorgeous, downy nest that they had built together, and into which only she was to accompany him, only she. The first time that she threw her head back in the white silk bedroom, offering him the line of her chin that he had so often kissed, she forgot all his old, already wearied embraces. She thought only of the many renewed tendernesses that she had saved for him, that would be sufficient for life without end. Then she grew pale and closed her eyes. His lips were cold.

She wanted to warm them against her own. For weeks she continued to try. Finally, she had to surrender to his will. Thenceforward, they lived without mutual reproaches, and without intense emotion, in a lukewarm atmosphere of an established friendship, needing a good table and carefully selected wines to keep it pleasant. Adelheid herself ordered his food. She made use of his respect for the artifices of luxury and tried to insinuate herself even more completely into his life, a life that should have belonged to her by rights without further question. She herself drove to Huster's to get wild fowl. She got caviar at Schischin's and lobsters at Martini's. Her thoughts about him were completely absorbed in the attempt to get tidbits for him. In the end, it hardly hurt her any longer to realize that she was least objectionable to him when she brought a new delicacy. After the dessert, she could see her success. When Andrew had sipped his cognac and lighted his cigar, she delightedly saw him become a youngster again. Again, he turned into the lively, precocious little boy who had caressed her so charmingly, the beginning of the winter, in the poverty stricken student's room in Dorothea Street. With melancholy she thought of the past.

"How lovely it was then," she sighed.

"I think it's much nicer here," he said rather coldly.

For his birthday, on the fifth of May, she had ordered a complete déjeuner from Chavet. It was a festival *à deux*. He sat opposite her in full dress, a rosebud in his buttonhole, and an elegant indifference in every movement. For an instant Adelheid forced herself to overcome a sharp pain.

"Where is his soul?" she asked herself. "In what way do I touch it? Alas, I touch only his taste-buds."

Where was the permanent relation on a basis of loving confidence that she had once dreamed of? It now rested on a basis of venison pasty and lobster salad.

When they got up from the table, a large package was brought. It contained a couple of lamps. Andrew recognized the slender, nude flower bearers with which Bienaimée had toyed.

"You've been spending a lot of money?" he said, looking at her askance.

She did not understand what was spoiling his humor. "I thought they were pretty. They told me that another similar pair had been bought by a person of very high standing."

"Ah! the person of very high standing has a taste like a cocotte. Excuse me, but the things are saccharine knick-knacks, inartistic, and indecently lascivious."

"Oh!"

"You don't mind my saying so, do you? You didn't make them. They're cheap and quite without artistic seriousness."

"You are severe."

"It's a question of esthetic principles."

For a long time he defended the seriousness and the dignity of art, so humiliating and so grotesque did the accident seem to him that Adelheid had given him the same figures that her husband had given to the little Matzke girl.

In vain she pleaded: "Tell me, honey, what can I give you that will please you?"

Finally, he interrupted himself in the midst of a burst of oratory.

"Give me some trifle that doesn't cost much. The value of a gift is determined by its relation to the intimacies of my personality. I'm a poet, am I not? Perhaps you have noticed that I sometimes look feverishly in my pockets. It's when I need a piece of paper or a pencil. Of course I don't blame you for not having noticed it. Our spirit is continually at work, you know. The impressions take form. We can't stop creating, not even when we eat or sleep. I need a writing pad in every room. It is one of the riddles of my own nature that I haven't already bought them. But that is the essence of an intellectual man; every action is accomplished with unspeakable labor."

She bought him the pads. . . .

[CLAIRE]

In order to get up his courage, he made a bet that evening, with Ratibohr, the banker. He paid no attention to the tenuous smile on the poker-face of the other. He wagered that he would conquer Claire Pimbusch within two weeks. Bets like this were essential to a man who knew how to live. He had read about them innumerable times. They were made every day.

The next afternoon he called at the Pimbusch home. A pale, serious servant, dressed in black, silently opened a padded door. He stood in a room where something secret seemed to be dreaming in a greenish half-light. In the middle, on the ottoman, something white moved. He came closer, and the lady of the house asked him to sit down. She was silent. Andrew cleared his throat. He looked around, startled. All sounds were swallowed up, as if they had been liquid, by the cotton wadding with which everything was thickly covered: the white silk walls, the furniture, the carpets, the ceiling. One felt removed from all the harshness of existence; one was freed from all pressure. Everything grew easy, soft, airy. One seemed to be lifted from the floor to swim, apart from one's body, in a dream world lighted in green, out of which visions without sense and without name frightened and fascinated the soul.

Fantastic plants with bulbous growths like faces moved their fleshy leaves like animals stretching their legs. Bleeding from horribly slashed wounds, dying soldiers lay on brilliant snow, across which vampires with long beards fluttered in their black caftans. They stretched out their claws and reached into the wounds, to pull out precious objects. One of them bit off the finger of an officer whose ring he could not pull off; another lifted his knife toward a pale head, the hairs on which rose in horror. Around the frightened man's neck was an amulet on a gold chain, the lock of which would not open. On a shelf, over which fell a black and silver cover, a hairy monster, possibly the desired missing link, curved one of his repulsively long arms around the form of an immature girl, with flying red braids. She was fainting with terror. Every few moments the monster powerfully lifted his other arm against an imaginary pursuer. Where he sat, Andrew was continually in danger of getting a box on the ear from this creature.

"I was dreaming," said Mrs. Pimbusch, with a yawn. "Ether dreams. They're a little too heavy. But, you see, one gets away from an idiotic reality as best one can. Have you ever had ether dreams?"

"No Madame, unfortunately not. But I have an idea I should like them very much."

"One has to get used to them. I've got so that I can take more than half a teaspoonful. How boring the world is, isn't it? Nothing ever happens. But when I've swallowed my half teaspoonful, I have all the experiences I want. My bosom grows empty; existence has no weight. I feel nothing but my heart, beating more and more intensely. It beats out great waves that carry me away."

"Where? If I may ask?"

"Everywhere. I wander through the world. I enjoy things that don't exist. I have adventures. Sometimes, I am even murdered. However, I am resuscitated right away."

"But that's just what I want!" cried Andrew, beginning to grow enthusiastic.

In her weary, tinkling voice, Mrs. Pimbusch went on: "I assure you, I can recollect long journeys of which I haven't the slightest idea whether I made them or not. Did I dream them? After all, it doesn't matter."

"In fact, they would be more beautiful that way."

"I see we understand each other. One time I was actually asked by bandits if I had any money with me."

"Ah?"

She noticed that she had disappointed him. She added: "It might have been much worse than that. I once took a trip to Italy. A friend had written me that the landscape was lovely. I got out of the train. There was no omnibus. A weird looking fellow offered to take me in a cab. Ah, that night in the cab! Well, I stopped to rest at an inn. Ah, that inn! Downstairs, there were only a lot of disgusting Italians. They were quite yellow in the face; and not one of them understood German. They give me the best room in the house. There are *two* beds in it! So I begin to get frightened. I lift up the pillows, but there's nothing under them. The doors don't close properly. A balcony runs all around the house. Any one who wants to can come in. I make a barricade with my baggage. But what use is that? Outside, something scratches, scratches, keeps on scratching. I assure you, it scratched for hours. I don't know, to this day, what it was."

"Mice, perhaps?"

"Oh! how can you say such a thing? I wake up the next morning. I am quite surprised to find myself still there. I take the weird cab again. There are no others to be had. But even if there had been, I think I would have taken *that* one, do you understand? The view was magnificent. I enjoyed it tremendously. Suddenly, the coachman turns around on the box, makes a mysterious face at me, and asks me something. I don't understand him, but I have an idea that something is coming. Finally, I can see that he wants nothing from me but money, the miserable fellow. 'Have you any gold?' So I tell him, 'No I can pay you nothing now.' I try to look as innocent as possible. When we arrive at the house of my friend, in the country, I pull out my pocketbook. The fellow looks at me—well, so—you know—so piercingly. He almost seems to be saying: 'If I had known that you had so much gold on you—' "

"Horrible!" ejaculated Andrew. His righteous feelings as a possessor of property were hurt.

But she smiled contemptuously. "Do you think so? I told it to my friend. He had the fellow arrested."

"Ah!"

"You don't understand me. I probably should not have given him in custody, because of the attempt at robbery."

"No?"

"At first, when I had not yet understood his question, I expected something quite different. Don't you understand me? No? I thought he was going to attack me."

"Oh, how terrible!"

"Horrible, wasn't it? And I couldn't forgive him for not wanting anything of me but my money. That was why I handed him over to the police with a peculiar feeling. With—what shall I say? with a kind of ecstasy. He was a funny looking man, too, very brown and powerful."

"Sadism, again," thought Andrew. He said: "You showed great courage, Madame. What else did you experience in Italy?"

She tittered. "*Did* I experience it? Was it an ether dream? Besides, I am not really interested in Italy. It's too saccharine. How does an Italian like that live? He thinks only of stealing from tourists, and of taking a girl away from some one else. He puts a dagger between the ribs of his rival and gets his absolution at the next church. Then everything is in order again. All this occurs in a shamelessly blue landscape, a landscape without the slightest delicacy of mood. No, I am interested in the Norwegian. He sits in his wooden shack smelling of cod liver oil and almost kills himself thinking about God, Satan, all his sins of desire, all the eternal punishments that hell has invented expressly for him. This kind of man, at least, has a soul."

"Even if it is slightly stuffy," said Andrew, nodding his approval. "This man with his refined self-torture really has something sadistic about him. If I may ask, what do you think of sadism, Madame?"

"Oh, it's very interesting. By the way, would you have thought that Director Kapeller could conceive of such a thing? He's inaugurating the German popular ballet with a 'Peeping Tom' act!"

"Couldn't he find anything older than that?"

"Nothing is newer, my dear friend. In this sketch some one looks through the keyhole. The lady is just unbuttoning her dress, when there is a knock. It is a lover, who cannot wait. But she is undecided. She takes off her dress. He becomes more noisy. He begins to scold. This strikes her as crude, and she occupies herself with her corset. All at once, everything is very still. Through the keyhole one hears only his panting. She begins to experience great pleasure. Very comprehensible, isn't it? She undoes her hair. She prepares to wash. From beyond the door, he pleads, miserably. Then there is another paroxysm of anguish. He tries to break the lock, in vain. He weeps heartrendingly. Suddenly, he dies. Yes, really, he dies! One can hear a repulsive rattle in his throat. She smiles at the public, delighted. And slowly, with great enjoyment, she pulls off her chemise. It's very fine, don't you think?"

"Very fine," repeated Andrew. "After all, sadism—"

She sighed. Then she stretched out an arm and pressed a button on the floor. The table at her side moved. Without a sound, it slid across the carpet, disappeared behind a curtain, and presently reappeared from the opposite wall. It brought tea and cigarettes.

Mrs. Pimbusch sucked in the sweet fumes of burning tobacco. "Ah! sadism!" she remarked. "For example, when I eat meat. You understand that I mean the meat of fellow creatures!"

She was silent, heavy with concupiscent thought. He observed her nostrils opening and closing. When he looked at her hair, he thought, with bitterness and contempt, of the fiery tow that thoughtlessly fluttered around the head of the little Matzke girl. Intoxication brooded over Claire Pimbusch; up and down the deep carmine locks climbed the pale bodies of licentious dreams with sad, degraded gestures.

He said to himself: "I've half won my bet. Why did I ask for two weeks? I could take her today, just as she lies there. I wonder whether she's just waiting for that. But I've done enough for today. I shall be wiser if I let her imagine things about me. When I come back, she will be ready for me."

He went to the club to tell about his success.

"There's something inhuman about the woman. Something that horrifies one. Gentlemen, it's going to take courage to carry out my intention. It's going to take a lot of courage. She strikes me as being vice incarnate. She's a symbol."

"Nonsense," said Doctor Klumpasch. "The poor woman is sick. And you, my dear man, are abetting her with your neurasthenic fancy."

The glance that Andrew gave him made him pause. He corrected himself. "I mean, of course, with your poetic fancy. Please excuse my scientific way of expressing myself."

The next time Andrew came to her Claire asked him about the physical characteristics of the gentlemen in whose company he bathed and was massaged. One of them was concealing unequal hips, another his flat feet, a third hid a still more unpleasant disability under the artful coverings supplied by Behrendt's studio. Each particularity excited her warm interest. Gradually, he stared at her as if she had been a magician. Under the hands of Fairy Pimbusch even the most harmless thing became indecent. She spoke of the large number of children of her friend, Mrs. Mohr, an excellent mother.

"As far as I'm concerned, I keep from having children by infamous artifices," she said, slowly and clearly. Then she asked a question: "Let's assume that you're deceiving your two mistresses, whose names every one knows, with some one—say, with me. Would you get any fun out of that? What would you feel like?"

He answered somewhat uncertainly. "I should probably be sorry. But I suppose passion would carry me away."

"Is that all? I, I almost faint with pleasure when I put myself in your place. I would imagine the two ladies together—I shan't say how. . . ."

She closed her eyes and pressed a second button on the floor. A round, black hole appeared in the white silk wall, and a hollow voice began to recite verses.

Sur ta chair le parfum rode
Comme autour d'un encensoir.

Mrs. Pimbusch moaned.

Et tu connais la caresse
Qui fait revivre les morts.

All at once she grimaced. It was the same expression that had previously troubled him so much. The blood-red corners of her mouth twisted; a greenish light played between the swollen, red-rimmed eyelids. The greenish light of the room seemed to emanate from her as she swam in it with the dull white, fish-like flesh of her members. It was a secret lascivious flagellation that captivated his senses. From the darkness came the dark words:

Quelquefois pour apaiser
Ta rage mystérieuse,
Tu prodigues, sérieuse,
La morsure et le baiser.

"What would you say to a mistress that alternately bit and kissed you, in order to satisfy an enigmatic lust?"

He was gasping for air and did not give her the information she wanted. Perplexed, he looked at the monstrous missing link, that was pressing its horrible arm more powerfully than ever around the trembling form of the girl. Andrew was ashamed at the sight. A curtain bellied out. The rainy summer day sent its humid, hot breath through the window.

Suddenly he leaned over the motionless woman. His forehead was covered with drops of moisture. She responded prematurely to a movement that he had not yet carried out. She gave a desperate, penetrating scream, full of maddened disgust and insane horror. With his burning face between his hands, Andrew tottered back; a cold, hard hand had given him a frightful slap. He looked around. Was everything really bewitched here? Where did that screaming woman get so much power? His cheek was bleeding. He got up, sobered and cooled. It was the disgusting missing link that kept lifting its hairy paw against an invisible pursuer.

The door had opened. Pimbusch, pressing down a little brilliantine on his mustache, came in.

"What's the matter, my dear Claire?" he asked. "Aren't you well?"

He observed the young man, who was looking at something on the table.

"Ah, Mr. Zumsee, I'm very happy to see you. Were you trying to help my poor wife? Don't trouble yourself; there's nothing to be done when she screams. I know all about it."

He hesitated. The sultry embarrassment reigning in the room upset him. From time to time his wife emitted raucous sounds. Then she rolled her head in the cushions and laughed shrilly. Pimbusch looked at Andrew. His silence completely enlightened the husband. Almost frightened, he drew back the hand that he had extended. Timidly he looked at it, and put the long delicately polished nail of his little finger against his lips.

"What did you do?" he said softly and quickly, with an agreeable smile. "I can see, you've tried—something else. But you're making a mistake, my dear man.

"You're really making a mistake," he repeated, emphatically, almost as if he were excusing himself.

Andrew pulled himself together. Freely and chivalrously, he declared: "Mr. Pimbusch, I am ready to give satisfaction for my interference with your rights."

The brandy manufacturer hopped up on his heels. "Interference? Oh, go ahead and interfere. If you can!" He was evidently excited by the idea of the satisfaction he was to receive.

"You approach the matter from an incorrect angle," he cried in a falsetto voice. He lifted his eyebrows earnestly, and added, instructively: "As I have said, I assure you that the interference you're talking about is quite impossible. There's no reason why I should forbid it; it forbids itself!"

Badly worried for fear he would have to avenge his honor quite unnecessarily, he repeated this several times. Finally, Andrew was forced to understand him. It seemed to him then that nothing more could be done here, that there was nothing more to be said. He let his head fall and departed, not very proudly. He was followed by the violent laughter of the lady whose riddle had been so abruptly solved, and by the chatter of the husband, whose rights were inviolable.

"So there still were some illusions for me to lose," he said to himself, outside. This embittered him against Mrs. Pimbusch. What kind of a creature was she, what kind of behavior was this? And her ideas! Italy was a beautiful country, made unsafe by brigands, that is, by some mice and by a coachman who wanted his fare in advance. Then, there was the well-known fine-looking man, "very brown and horrible," with whom all the lady's stories had to close, or she would have thought herself sunk very low. Her indecencies were just as Philistine as the pruderies of other people. But what right had any one to ask anything of such people? It was stupid. He was seeking the higher spiritual corruption of the few elect connoisseurs who were scattered throughout Europe. How stupid to think of finding it where there was nothing but degenerate idiocy, exhausted nerves, morbid fish-like blood—where there was, at best, only a mentally deformed creature like this. These people were doing all they could to get rid of their bourgeois morality and were not getting one bit of spirituality or cleverness in return. After all, Griseldis von Hochstetten was right, the haughty old maid who despised the people on whose bounty she lived. There were only good citizens in the Land of Cockaigne.

Mrs. Pimbusch had a head which looked like a poisonous, swollen, flower on a stem that was too thin for it. What was she if one examined her closely? To this, Andrew answered sadly: "A hysterical orchid. . . ."

NOTE ON W. L. GEORGE'S

"A BED OF ROSES"

Victoria Fulton returns to England from India, where she has been married to Dicky Fulton, a gay officer. Having left her husband, she begins a flirtation on the boat with Major Cairnes. Once again in England, she is offered a job by her brother, a school teacher; but she rejects it. Having no special skills, she steadily sinks lower and lower economically. Finally, she gets a job as a waitress in a cheap tea-room; and by observing how customers really behave, she manages to accumulate a business sense.

While a waitress, she meets a socialist, Farwell, and makes a friend of Betty. The first tells her that economics is the cause of woman's enslavement; the other, that marriage is the only escape.

One day Victoria shambles into Green Park, near Buckingham Palace, and again meets Major Cairnes. He offers to make her his mistress. Our selection begins after she has taken up residence in the "Bed of Roses."

W. L. GEORGE

A Bed of Roses

Born in Paris, W. L. George (1882-1926) spoke French throughout his youth and served in the French army; nevertheless his literary speech was English and he lived in London for a long time. He was a leading feminist of his day, a defender of women, an opponent of all that oppressed them, and a herald of new horizons for their sex. He was also a militant republican—which in England is regarded as "bad taste" among the refined—and he was an early champion of socialism. For George, the problem of woman was economic. Poverty forced her into drab marriage, domestic servitude, narrowed existence, and even prostitution. These items in the feminist credo were richly illustrated by him in his *The Intelligence of Women, The Story of Woman,* and even in his pleasant study of his literary competitors, *A Novelist on Novels*. Occasionally George left the path of love for politics, notably in his *Caliban,* a ruthless exposure of the "Press Lords" who dominated Britain's daily thoughts. But George's reputation as a writer rests firmly on his position as the champion of woman among novelists. *A Bed of Roses* (1910), from which our selection is taken, is as fresh today as when it appeared.

VICTORIA turned uneasily on the sofa and stretched her arms. She yawned, then sat up abruptly. Sudermann's *Katzensteg* fell to the ground off her lap. She was in a tiny back room, so overcrowded by the sofa and easy-chair that she could almost touch a small rosewood bureau opposite. She looked round the room lazily, then relapsed on the sofa, hugging a cushion. She snuggled her face into it, voluptuously breathing in its compactness laden with scent and tobacco smoke. Then, looking up, she reflected that she was very comfortable.

Victoria's boudoir was the back extension of the dining-room. Shut off by the folding doors, it contained within its tiny space the comfort which is only found in small rooms. It was papered red with a flowered pattern, which she thought ugly, but which had just been imported from France and was quite the thing. The sofa and easy-chair were covered with obtrusively new red and white chintz; a little pile of cushions had fallen on the indeterminate Persian pattern of the carpet. Long coffee-coloured curtains, banded with chintz, shut out part of the high window, through which a little of the garden and the bare branches of a tree could be seen. Victoria took all this in for the hundredth time. She had been sleeping for an hour; she felt smooth, stroked; she could have hugged all these pretty things, the little brass fender, the books, the Delft inkpot on the little bureau. Everything in the room was already intimate. Her eyes dwelt on the clean chintzes, on the half blinds surmounted by insertion, the brass ashtrays, the massive silver cigarette box.

Victoria stood up, the movement changing the direction of her contemplative mood. The Gothic rosewood clock told her it was a little after three. She went to the cigarette box and lit a cigarette. While slowly inhaling the smoke, she rang the bell. On her forefinger there was a faint yellow tinge of nicotine which had reached the nail.

"I shall have to be manicured again," she soliloquised. "What a nuisance. Better have it done to-day while I get my hair done, too."

"Yes, mum." A neat dark maid stood at the door. Victoria did not answer for a second. The girl's black dress was perfectly brushed, her cap, collar, cuffs, apron, immaculate white.

"I'm going out now, Mary," said Victoria. "You'd better get my brown velvet out."

"Yes, mum," said the maid. "Will you be back for dinner, mum?"

"No, I'm dining with the Major. Oh, don't get the velvet out. It's muddy out, isn't it?"

"Yes, mum. It's been raining in the morning, mum."

"Ah, well, perhaps I'd better wear the grey coat and skirt. And my furs and toque."

"The beaver, mum?"

"No, of course not, the white fox. And, oh, Mary, I've lost my little bag somewhere. And tell Charlotte to send me up a cup of tea at half-past three."

Mary left the room silently. She seldom asked questions, and never expressed pleasure, displeasure or surprise.

Victoria walked up to her bedroom; the staircase was papered with a pretty blue and white pattern over a dado of white lincrusta. A few French engravings stood out in their old gold frames. Victoria stopped at the first landing to look at her favourite, after Lancret; it represented lovers surprised in a barn by an irate husband.

The bedroom occupied the entire first floor. On taking possession of the little house she had realised that, as she would have no callers, a drawing-room would be absurd, so had suppressed the folding doors and made the two rooms into one large one. In the front, between the two windows, stood her dressing-table, now covered with small bottles, some in cut glass and full of scent, others more workmanlike, marked vaseline, glycerine, skin food, bay rum. Scattered about them on the lace toilet cover, were boxes of powder, white, sepia, bluish, puffs, little sticks of cosmetics, some silver-backed brushes, some squat and short-bristled, others with long handles, with long soft bristles, one studded with short wires, another with whalebone, some clothes brushes, too, buttonhooks, silver trays, a handglass with a massive silver handle. Right and left, two little electric lamps and above the swinging mirror, a shaded bulb shedding a candid glow.

One wall was blotted out by two inlaid mahogany wardrobes; through the open doors of one could be seen a pile of frilled linen, lace petticoats, chemises threaded with coloured ribbons. On the large armchair, covered with blue and white chintz, was a crumpled heap of white linen, a pair of *Café au lait* silk stockings. A light mahogany chair or two stood about the room. Each had a blue and white cushion. A large wash-stand stood near the mantelpiece, laden with blue and white ware. The walls were covered with blue silky paper, dotted here and there with some colour prints. These were mostly English; their nude beauties sprawled and languished slyly among bushes, listening to the pipes of Pan.

Victoria went into the back of the room, and, unhooking her cream silk dressing jacket, threw it on the bed. This was a vast low edifice of glittering brown wood, covered now by a blue and white silk bedspread with edges smothered in lace; from the head of the bed peeped out the tips of two lace pillows. By the side of the bed, on the little night table, stood two or three books, a reading lamp and a small silver basket full of sweets. An ivory bell-pull hung by the side of a swinging switch just between the pillows.

Victoria walked past the bed and looked at herself in the high looking-glass set into the wall, which rose from the floor to well above her head. The mirror threw back a pleasing reflection. It showed her a woman of twenty-six, neither short nor tall, dressed in a white petticoat and mauve silk corsets. The corsets fitted well into the figure, which was round and inclined to be full. Her arms and neck, framed with white frillings, were uniformly cream coloured, shadowed a little darker at the elbows, near the rounded shoulders and under the jaw; all her skin had a glow, half vigorous, half delicate. But the woman's face interested Victoria more. Her hair was piled high and black over a broad, low, white forehead; the cream of the skin turned faintly into colour at the cheeks, into crimson at the lips; her eyes were large, steel grey, long lashed and thrown into relief by a faintly mauve aura. There was strength in the jaw, square, hard, fine cut; there was strength, too, in the steadiness of the eyes, in the slightly compressed red lips.

"Yes," said Victoria to the picture, "you mean business." She reflected that she was fatter than she had ever been. Two months of rest had worked a revolution in her. The sudden change from toil to idleness had caused a reaction. There was something almost matronly about the soft curves of her breast. But the change was to the good. She was less interesting than the day when the Major sat face to face with her in Soho, his pulse beating quicker and quicker as her ravished beauty stimulated him by its novelty; but she was a finer animal. Indeed, she realised to the full that she had never been so beautiful, that she had never been beautiful before, as men understand beauty.

The past two months had been busy as well as idle, busy, that is, as an idle woman's time. She had felt weary now and then, like those unfortunates who are bound to the wheel of pleasure and are compelled to "do too much." Major Cairns had launched out into his first experiment in pseudo-married life with an almost boyish zest. It was he who had practically compelled her to take the little house in Elm Tree Place.

"Think of it, Vic," he had said, "your own little den. With no prying neighbours. And your own little garden. And dogs."

He had waxed quite sentimental over it and Victoria, full of the gratitude that makes a woman cling to the fireman when he has rescued her, had helped him to build a home for the idyll. Within a feverish month he had produced the house as it stood. He had hardly allowed Victoria any choice in the matter, for he would not let her do anything. He practically compelled her to keep to her suite at the hotel, so that she might get well. He struggled alone with the decoration, plumbing, furniture and linoleum, linen and garden. Now and then he would ring up to know whether she preferred salmon pink to *fraise écrasée* cushions, or he would come up to the hotel rent in twain by conflicting rugs. At last he had pronounced the house ready, and, after supplying it with Mary and Charlotte, had triumphantly installed his new queen in her palace.

Victoria's first revelation was one of immense joy; unquestioning, and for one moment quite disinterested. It was not until a few hours had elapsed that she regained mastery over herself. She went from room to room punching curtains, pressing her hands over the polished wood, at times feeling voluptuously on hands and knees the pile of the carpets. She almost loved Cairns at the moment. It was quite honestly that she drew him down by her side on the red and white sofa and softly kissed his cheek and drove his ragged moustache into rebellion. It was quite willingly, too, that she felt his grasp tighten on her and that she yielded to him. Her lips did not abhor his kisses.

Some hours later she became herself again. Cairns was good to her, but good as the grazier is to the heifer from whom he hopes to breed; she was his creature, and must be well housed, well fed, well clothed, so that his eyes might feast on her, scented so that his desire for her might be whipped into action. In her moments of cold horror in the past she had realised herself as a commodity, as a beast of burden; now she realised herself as a beast of pleasure. The only thing to remember then was to coin into gold her condescension.

Victoria looked at herself again in the glass. Yes, it was condescension. As a free woman, that is, a woman of means, she would never have surrendered to Cairns the tips of her fingers. Off the coast of Araby she had yielded to him a little, so badly did she need human sympathy, a little warmth in the cold of the lonely night. When he appeared again as the rescuer she had flung herself into his arms with an appalling fetterless joy. She had plunged her life into his as into Nirvana.

Now her head was cooler. Indeed, it had been cool for a month. She saw Cairns as an average man, neither good nor evil, a son of his father and the seed thereof, bound by a strict code of honour and a lax code of morals. She saw him as a dull man with the superficial polish that even the roughest pebble acquires in the stream of life. He had found her at low water mark, stranded and gasping on the sands; he had picked her up and imprisoned her in this vivarium to which he alone had access, where he could enjoy his capture to the full.

"And the capture's business is to get as much out of the captor as possible, so as to buy its freedom back." This was Victoria's new philosophy. She had dexterously induced Cairns to give her a thousand a year. She knew perfectly well that she could live on seven hundred, perhaps on six. Besides, she played on his pride. Cairns was, after all, only a big middle-aged boy; it made him swell to accompany Victoria to Sloane Street to buy a hat, to the Leicester Gallery to see the latest one-man show. She was a credit to a fellow. Thus she found no difficulty in making him buy her sables, gold purses, Whistler etchings. They would come in handy, she reflected, "when the big bust-up came." For Victoria was not rocking herself in the transitory, but from the very first making ready for the storm which follows on the longest stretch of fair weather.

"Yes," said Victoria again to the mirror, "you mean business." The door opened and almost noiselessly closed. Mary brought in a tray covered with a clean set of silver-backed brushes, and piled up the other ready to take away. She put a water can on the washstand and parsimoniously measured into it some attar of roses. Victoria stepped out into the middle of the room and stood there braced and stiff as the maid unlaced and then tightened her stays.

"What will you wear this evening, mum?" asked Mary, as Victoria sat down in the low dressing chair opposite the swinging glass.

"This evening?" mused Victoria. "Let me see, there's the *gris perle*."

"No, mum, I've sent it to the cleaner's," said Mary. Her fingers were deftly removing the sham curls from Victoria's back hair.

"You've worn it four times, mum," she added reproachfully.

"Oh, have I? I don't think . . . oh, that's all right, Mary."

Victoria reflected that she would never have a well-trained maid if she finished sentences such as this. Four times! Well, she must give the Major his money's worth.

"You might wear your red Directoire, mum," suggested Mary in the unemotional tones of one who is paid not to hear slips.

"I might. Yes. Perhaps it's a little loud for the Carlton."

"Yes, mum," said Mary without committing herself.

"After all, I don't think it is so loud."

"No, mum," said Mary in even tones. She deftly rolled her mistress' plaits round the crown.

Victoria felt vaguely annoyed. The woman's words were anonymous.

"But what *do* you think, Mary?" she asked.

"Oh, I think you're quite right, mum," said Mary.

Victoria watched her face in the glass. Not a wave of opinion rippled over it.

Victoria got up. She stretched out her arms for Mary to slip the skirt over her head. The maid closed the lace blouse, quickly clipped the fasteners together, then closed the placket hole completely. Without a word she fetched the light grey coat, slipped it on Victoria's shoulders. She found the grey skin bag, while Victoria put on her white fox toque. She then encased Victoria's head in a grey silk veil and sprayed her with scent. Victoria looked at herself in the glass. She was lovely, she thought.

"Anything else, mum?" said Mary's quiet voice.

"No, Mary, nothing else."

"Thank you, mum."

As Victoria turned, she found the maid had disappeared, but her watchful presence was by the front door to open it for her. Victoria saw her from the stairs, a short, erect figure, with a pale face framed in dark hair. She stood with one hand on the latch, the other holding a cab whistle; her eyes were fixed upon the ground. As Victoria passed out she looked at Mary. The girl's eyes were averted still, her face without a question. Upon her left hand she wore a thin gold ring with a single red stone. The ring fastened on Victoria's imagination as she stepped into a hansom which was loafing near the door. It was not the custom, she knew, for a maid to wear a ring; and this alone was enough to amaze her. Was it possible that Mary's armour was not perfect in every point of servility? No doubt she had just put it on as it was her evening out and she would be leaving the house in another half hour. And then? Would another and a stronger hand take hers, hold it, twine its fingers among her fingers? Victoria wondered, for the vision of love and Mary were incongruous ideas. It was almost inconceivable that with her cap and apron she doffed the mantle of her reserve; she surely could not vibrate; her heart could not beat in unison with another. Yet, there was the ring, the promise of passion. Victoria nursed for a moment the vision of the two spectral figures, walking in a dusky park, arms round waists, then of shapes blended on a seat, faces hidden, lip to lip.

Victoria threw herself back in the cab. What did it all matter after all? Mary was the beast of burden which she had captured by piracy. She had been her equal once when abiding by the law; she had shared her toil and her slender meed of thanks. Now she was a buccaneer, outside the social code, and as such earned the right to command. So much did Victoria dominate that she thought she would refrain from the exercise of a bourgeois prerogative: the girl should wear her ring, even though custom forbade it, load herself with trinkets if she chose, for as a worker and a respecter of social laws surely she might well be treated as the sacrifical ox.

The horse trotted down Baker Street, then through Wigmore Street. Daylight was already waning; here and there houses were breaking into light between the shops, some of which had remembered it was Christmas eve and decked themselves out in holly. At the corner near the Bechstein Hall the cab came to a stop behind the long line of carriages waiting for the end of a concert. Victoria had time to see the old crossing sweeper, with a smile on his face and mistletoe in his battered billy-cock. The festivities would no doubt yield him his annual kind word from the world. She passed the carriages, all empty still. The cushions were rich, she could see. Here and there she could see a fur coat or a book on the seat; in one of them sat an elderly maid, watching the carriage clock under the electric light, meanwhile nursing a chocolate pom who growled as Victoria passed.

"Slaves all of them," thought Victoria. "A slave the good elderly maid, thankful for the crumbs that fall from the pom's table. Slaves, too, the fat coachman, the slim footman despite their handsome English faces, lit up by a gas lamp. The raw material of fashion."

The cab turned into the greater blaze of Oxford Circus, past the Princes Street P.R.R. There was a great show of Christmas cakes there. From the cab Victoria, craning out, could see a young and pretty girl behind the counter busily packing frosted biscuits. Victoria felt warmed by the sight; she was not malicious, but the contrast told her of her emancipation from the thrall of eight bob a week. Through Regent Street, all congested with traffic, little figures laden with parcels darting like frightened ants under the horse's nose, then into the immensity of Whitehall, the cab stopped at the Stores in Victoria Street.

Victoria had but recently joined. A store ticket and a telephone are the next best thing to respectability and the same thing as regards comfort. They go far to establish one's social position. Victoria struggled through the wedged crowd. Here and there boys and girls with flushed faces, who enjoyed being squashed. She could see crowds of jolly women picking from the counters things useful and things pretty; upon signal discoveries loudly proclaimed followed continual exclamations that they would not do. Family parties, excited and talkative, left her unmoved. That world, that of the rich and the free, would ultimately be hers; her past, that of the worn men and women ministering behind the counter to the whims of her future world, was dead.

She only had to buy a few Christmas presents. There was one for Betty, one for Cairns, and two for the servants. In the clothing department she selected a pretty blue merino dressing-gown and a long purple sweater for Betty. The measurements were much the same as hers, if a little slighter; besides, such garments need not fit. She went downstairs and disposed of the Major by means of a small gold cigarette case with a leather cover. No doubt he had a dozen, but what could she give a man?

The stores buzzed round her like a parliament of bees. Now and then people shouldered past her, a woman trod on her foot and neglected to apologise; parcels, too, inconveniently carried, struck her as she passed. She felt the joy of the lost; for none looked at her, save now and then a man drowned in the sea of women. The atmosphere was stuffy, however, and time was precious as she had put off buying presents until so late. Followed by a porter with her parcels she left the stores, experiencing the pleasure of credit on an overdrawn deposit order account. The man piled the goods in a cab, and in a few minutes she had transferred Betty's present to a carrier's office, with instructions to send them off at eight o'clock by a messenger who was to wait at the door until the addressee returned. This was not unnecessary foresight, for Betty would not be back until nine. With the Major's cigarette case in her white muff, Victoria then drove to Bond Street, there to snatch a cup of tea. On the way she stopped the cab to buy a lace blouse for Mary and an unbrella for Charlotte, having forgotten them in her hurry. She decided to have tea at Miss Fortesque's, for Miss Fortesque's is one of those tearooms where ladies serve ladies, and the newest fashions come. It is the right place to be seen in at five o'clock. At the door a small boy in an Eton jacket and collar solemnly salutes with a shiny topper. Inside, the English character of the room is emphasised. There are no bamboo tables, no skimpy French chairs or Japanese umbrellas; everything is severely plain and impeccably clean. The wood shines, the table linen is hard and glossy, the glass is hand cut and heavy, the plate quite plain and obviously dear. On the white distempered walls are colour prints after Reynolds, Romney, Gainsborough. All conspires with the thick carpet to promote silence, even the china and glass, which seem no more to dare to rattle than if they were used in a men's club.

Victoria settled down in a large chintz-covered armchair and ordered tea from a good-looking girl in a dark grey blouse and dress. Visibly a hockey skirt had not long ago been more natural to her. As she returned Victoria observed the slim straight lines of her undeveloped figure. She was half graceful, half gawky, like most young English girls.

"It's been very cold to-day, hasn't it?" said the girl as she set down bread and butter, then cake and jam sandwiches.

"Very," Victoria looked at her narrowly. "I suppose it doesn't matter much in here, though."

"Oh, no, we don't notice it." The girl looked weary for a second. Then she smiled at Victoria and walked away to a corner where she stood listlessly.

"Slave, slave." The words rang through Victoria's head. "You talk to me when you're sick of the sight of me. You talk of things you don't care about. You smile if you feel your face shows you are tired, in the hope I'll tip you silver instead of copper."

Victoria looked round the room. It was fairly full, and as Fortesquean as it was British. The Fortesque tradition is less fluid than the constitution of the Empire. Its tables shout "we are old wood"; its cups say "we are real porcelain"; and its customers look at one another and say, "Who the devil are you?" Nobody thinks of having tea there unless they have between one and three thousand a year. It is too quiet for ten thousand a year or for three pounds a week; it caters for ladies and gentlemen and freezes out everybody else, regardless of turnover. Thus its congregation (for its afternoon rite is almost hieratical) invariably includes a retired colonel, a dowager with a daughter about to come out, several squiresses who came to Miss Fortesque's as little girls and are handing on the torch to their own. There is a sprinkling of women who have been shopping in Bond Street, buying things good but not showy. As the customers, or rather clients, lapse with a sigh into the comfortable armchairs they look round with the covert elegance that says: "And who the devil are you?"

Victoria was in her element. She had had tea at Miss Fortesque's some dozen years before when up for the week from Lympton; thus she felt she had the freedom of the house. She sipped her tea and dropped crumbs with unconcern. She looked at the dowager without curiosity. The dowager speculated as to the maker of her coat and skirt. Victoria's eyes fixed again on the girl who was passing her with a laden tray. The effort was bringing out the beautiful lines of the slender arms, drooping shoulders, round bust. Her fair hair clustered low over the creamy nape.

"Slave, slave," thought Victoria again. "What are you doing, you fool? Roughening your hands, losing flesh, growing old. And there's nothing for a girl to do but serve on, serve, always serve. Until you get too old. And then, scrapped. Or you marry . . . anything that comes along. Good luck to you, paragon, on your eight bob a week."

Victoria went downstairs and got into the cab, which had been waiting for her with the servants' presents. It was no longer cold, but foggy and warm. She undid her white fox stole, dropping on the seat her crocodile skin bag, whence escaped a swollen purse of gold mesh.

Upstairs the girl cleared away. Under the butter-smeared plate, which slipped through her fingers, she found half-a-crown. Her heart bounded with joy.

NOTES ON ROBERT BRIFFAULT'S

"EUROPA"

The story begins in the quaint Rome residence of the Berns, an eccentric family of British diplomats. The author uses Julian Bern's education and experience as devices for showing the detailed culture, conversational character, and social setting of high European society of the early twentieth century. Julian's chief interest is biology, in which he has been inspired by Sir Anthony Fisher.

The scene shifts to London. Mrs. Douglas, his hostess, warmly champions the cause of the Suffragettes, and its theoretical implications lead to the swift intimacy between Julian and Sylvia Chantry, whom he has just met. Pallier and Eleanor, mentioned in our selection, are chance characters who have just entered the story.

ROBERT BRIFFAULT

Europa

WHEN Robert Briffault was born in London in 1876, his father was a French diplomat accredited to Britain. Robert became a physician and practiced in New Zealand and when World War I delivered him to the trenches in France, he planned a three-volume study of the ethnological position of women, *The Mothers.* A lively agnostic and rebel, a Communist à la Briffault, he has written books predicting the death of the British empire, and he has poured his indignation upon Europe's high-born scoundrels and has never lowered his flag. His leading fiction contribution is *Europa* (1935), in which, twenty years after, he presented a picture of Europe dancing on the 1914 volcano. Many critics assailed his choice of the novel as his vehicle. They ignored the breadth and drama of his canvas and its faithful picture of the *haut monde* as well as Briffault's need to illustrate the whole of a society by some more syncretic method than that of serial exposition in a treatise. *Europa* revels in emphasis. Briffault, a champion of women, is frankly appalled at their treatment in the world we live in and he does not mince words.

JULIAN and I were waiting at Pallier's rooms in Great Stanhope Street with Sir Anthony Fisher, whom we had looked up in the somewhat dreary temperance hotel in Bloomsbury where he had been staying, and had arranged to bring over to spend the evening. Pallier's rooms were decorated in restful grey, with ebony bookpresses furnished with rarely bound volumes. There were etchings, on the walls, of elegant women by Paul Helleu, the portraitist of the girl of the period, charming, tangled, cobwebby lines, hazes of soft hair, of downy flesh, of thready, sumptuous cloth. There were licentious Japanese prints by Hokusai.

Pallier apologised as he came in a little flurried, and ordered his man to bring drinks and cigars. He had been running all over the place, waiting in dingy police rooms, interviewing officials.

"You have become quite a knight of the 'foolish virgins' cause," Julian twitted.

"The poor creatures! One can't very well leave them in the pickle they are getting themselves into," he said, picking out a cigar. "This women's question is a sexual question. It is a question of biology. Much more of your resort, sir, than of the politicians or social philosophers," he said to Sir Anthony, settling down in the depths of a chair.

Sir Anthony, smiling meekly, agreed. He talked quietly, giving his views of the nature of sex. Reproduction, like assimilation, from which it was not essentially distinguishable, was, he said, a primary distinctive quality of protoplasm. There had been some fundamental work done lately on the chemistry of living matter. Its properties depended upon the singular size and complexity of compound molecules formed round the carbon atom, which enabled changes to proceed within the molecule itself without destroying its identity. The protoplasmic multimolecule had to assimilate and multiply, or else disintegrate. But sexual reproduction was a special adaptation. Sir Anthony cited the famous observations of Maupas. Protozoan animalcules, when they have wasted too much of their substance in active pursuits, seek out well-nourished, plump individuals of their own species, and conjugate with them, thus restoring the even balance of their nutritional rhythm. Sex was merely a device for the rescue and perpetuation of the over-active organism, the male. "Speaking fundamentally, it only interests the male. Females, well-nourished individuals, can reproduce parthenogenetically up to quite high in the animal scale, as high as insects and crustaceans, though, of course, the female becoming gradually adapted to the sexual mode of reproduction, it becomes a necessity instead of being an expedient. But it is in adaptation to the masculine urge that it has developed; it is as an adaptation to the male organism that the female requires sex. Does not that explain a good deal?"

"Everything possible has been done so that the sexual urges of the human female should be as completely unadapted as possible to those of the male," Pallier said. "The savage tabus and superstitious fears of primitive man, the demands of landowning transmitters of property for virgins preserved untouched, have been perpetuated by institutions which require household labor and the breeding of heirs to property. Women have been made 'pure,' that is to say, they have been spayed, whereas the masculine sexual urge has remained what God, or, as you say, natural selection and the primary qualities of protoplasm, made it, and which our abusive Christian vocabulary of sexophobic vituperation describes as gross, depraved, or any other term of vilification that the theological moral vocabulary affords."

"Everything which is termed depravity is normally found throughout animal nature," said Sir Anthony. "Do you remember, Bern, those polychœtes which we were observing, *Dodecaceria concharum,* whose eyes develop only when the creatures are in rut? There are marine annelids, such as *Eunice viridis,* which at the breeding season develop visual organs round their sexual parts."

"How confoundedly convenient!" laughed Pallier.

"The sense of sight very probably arose in relation to masculine sexual urges," said Sir Anthony.

"And people speak with upturned noses of 'voyeurism'!" Pallier put in. "To demand that the light should be put out is supposed to be the distinguishing mark of a 'pure' woman."

I recalled, without mentioning names, what I had heard about Mrs. Douglas. During some twelve years of cohabitation, she had never permitted her husband to behold her even partially undraped. If he had taken to drink and to minxes, who was to blame? Douglas asked, when Mrs. Douglas recited the fate to which his brutality had subjected her.

"Civilisation consists in subjecting the lower instincts to the control of reason—and look at civilisation," Pallier said. "Art and half a dozen other things have been defined as the diverting of animal energies into higher channels—and look at them. I suspect that all the queerness, mental derangement, mystic cretinism, imbecility which appear in those diverted energies are in the main the result of psychological castration. Oh, there are people who believe, quite honestly doubtless, that they have suppressed the chemistry of their protoplasm. They, however, fail to observe that they are queer—so queer that they have at times to be put into straitjackets." Pallier rose to flick quite needlessly the ash of his cigar on a distant ashtray. "It's not the stark, raving lunacy of Christian sexophobia that's the real danger. Any one can see through that. The Christian fathers with their demented fury, their 'gate of hell,' their devil dwelling in the flesh, are disowned even by moral theologians. It's the dementia and humbug which have sunk so deep into the very marrow of our bones that we invent a thousand devious special pleadings to fool ourselves, snatching at every sophistry, picking up every scrap of pretext, assuming countless disguises. It calls itself sane and healthy judgment, æsthetic taste, normality. The really normal man is said to be 'obsessed' with sex. Did you ever hear of anyone being obsessed with golf, or cricket, or postage-stamp collecting, or blue china? Oh, no. Golf, and postage-stamps, and blue china are not obsessions; but the primary animating principle of protoplasm is. And women, spayed by the very tradition which makes them economic dependents, resent being 'treated like prostitutes'—observe the bitter vileness of the words—that is to say, like free women with sexual urges adapted to the masculine urge, which, as you say, is the biological function of sex. They expect those biological urges to be 'sublimated' into higher channels of ideal sentiments and respectful consideration, and I know not what other form of psychological castration. They rationalise and trivialise sex till they have nothing to offer but an inert log which strikes the male with impotence. And now fundamentally deranged women are seeking 'equality' with fundamentally deranged men."

Sir Anthony Fisher, who, being in the habit of keeping good hours, left early, spoke of the sentimentalising interpretations of current natural history. Prolonged cohabitation of the sexes was, he said, extremely rare in the animal kingdom, and differed entirely, when it occurred, from the anthropomorphic fairy tales which still circulated in scientific writings. It was the same, he believed, with the descriptions of the customs of savages. "The inexact sciences, as represented in influential learned institutions, are merely apologetics for our established social and political institutions," he said.

We stayed on awhile after he had gone, Pallier insisting upon mixing a grog as night-cap.

"The dilemma is to combine biological facts with the humbug upon which our established social institutions are founded," he said reflectively, as we sank back into the arms of the too comfortable chairs.

"Or to have a spring cleaning of our social institutions," Julian said.

Pallier pulled a doubtful face. "Undoubtedly a change is taking place," he said. "There is a growing class of women who are taking to earning their living. They are more or less economically independent of our marriage institutions. The morals of professional women are consequently entirely different from those of ladies. People used to talk a great deal of nonsense about actresses, the Puritans suggesting that it was the wicked stage which corrupted their morals. It was, of course, nothing of the sort. Actresses were the first professional women to earn an independent living. It now looks as if women would in the near future be earning their living in a hundred different ways besides going on the stage. That is a very serious matter. It will be the end of Christian morality, if the spaying effects of Christian morality wear off. Up to recently, men were supposed to avail themselves of the institution of prostitution, which has reached a high degree of development in England."

"A disgusting solution," said Julian.

"Agreed. Paying a woman is another way to defeat the masculine instincts, which demand conquest. Our enormous population of prostitutes, mostly of the servant-girl class, is scarcely calculated to exalt the character of British masculinity. There are, of course, choicer Temples of Venus, but they are atrociously expensive, and are thus practically reserved for the ruling class. Lady Cressiden's establishment is under royal patronage. You have to be in Debrett to have an entry. I dare say I can introduce you if you wish. Lady Cressiden, last time I visited her, offered me the daughter of an Archdeacon. But as you say, that is not a solution. As a result, our men constantly go in for queer and fanciful notions. There's another place, a branch establishment of Lady Cressiden's, where they have a little girls' school. All quite in order, with certified teachers. Fellows go there to spank the little girls and to stick pins into their bottoms."

"Women are not even provided with such satisfactions. It is as hard on them as on the men," I ventured.

"Every bit. Consequently they get even more impossibly queer. They take to 'movements,' or lap dogs, or the improvement of the human race, or Buddhism, or—to a growing extent—to female friendships. They get generally uplifted, like our friend Eleanor. She had an illness over her first love-affair. I understand that she has since taken vows of chastity—

> Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς οὔτε μοιχὸς οὔτ' ἀνήρ
> ὅστις πρὸς ἐμὲ πρόσεσιν ἐστυκώς,"

Pallier quoted with gusto. He mused a while over the stump of his cigar. "My name is from the Norman French 'paillard,' " he said, with a dry smile. "It was borne by my scoundrels of ancestors long ago, and was no doubt esteemed by them and by their womenfolk as a commendable and honorific designation."

Mrs. Montague-Douglas's sittingroom looked like a second-hand shop, furnished as it was with ottomans of uncertain foundation covered over with a miscellany of decayed rugs and mangy pelts. The habitués—she entertained a great deal—had acquired the habit of testing the legs of the chairs before sitting down. With Julian and Pallier, Eleanor Astley had acceded to Mrs. Douglas's pressing invitations. There had really not been time, in the turmoil, to see the girls at all. Mildred Koe-Billings and the baby—a girl—were doing very well, Eleanor informed them in answer to enquiries.

"And here is a friend of yours," Mrs. Douglas said to Julian, with a smile that made him think unpleasantly of a pimp.

For a moment, he did not recognise the young woman. It was Sylvia Chantry. She seemed changed a good deal. She was older, of course, looking taller in her high trimmed hat. There was a poised, self-possessed, prosperous look about her. Sylvia was looking extremely well in a fashionable magpie tailored costume of good cloth and cut. Julian was merely friendly and polite, greeting her. In the brief exchange of remarks he learned that Sylvia had been spending some time in Paris, that she had now a studio in Hampstead. But there was no opportunity for talk amid the heated cross-fire of conversation. . . .

While Mrs. Douglas was seeing Eleanor and Pallier out, Julian turned to Sylvia Chantry.

"Are you doing anything in particular this evening? Would you care to go somewhere and have dinner presently?"

Sylvia, who had sat quiet during the discussion, not taking part in it, accepted. Marion and the others were staying on to discuss with Mrs. Douglas some arrangements concerning the distribution of propaganda literature.

"Suppose we go to the Austrian Exhibition?" Julian suggested to Sylvia when they were outside. It was a warm day, rather too close for a theatre. The open-air restaurant at Earl's Court would be pleasant for dinner.

It was not crowded. Most people were at Ascot. On the lawn where a fountain played, under the trees, it was quiet and cool. An orchestra in the distance played Viennese waltzes.

"I met a friend of yours the other day," Julian said to Sylvia, "Mr. Dexter."

"Oh, yes," Sylvia said after a second's thought. "I remember. Well, not exactly a friend. I met him only once or twice. I remember now. At the skating, and you . . ." She laughed, glancing at him.

Julian laughed too, a little ashamed at the recollection of how foolish he must have seemed.

"It seems such ages ago. And you are changed. You were, I think, living in Italy, were you not?" she said.

Julian told her about his life in general since they had met. There seemed precious little to tell. "And you, what are you doing?"

Sylvia told him of her having been mostly in Paris. She had not very long since come back to London.

"So you got to Paris after all. I remember your telling me you wanted to go there," Julian said.

"Yes, when mother died, I sold up everything, raked up what money I could, and went off to the Quartier. Took a little room in Rue Gît-le-Cœur, sharing it with another girl," Sylvia said. She had had a pretty rough time. Had worked at Julien's. Life classes, trying to copy the style of Ingres and David. They did not have girl students at the École des Beaux Arts. One day a painter called Matisse, who knew the girl she was rooming with, happened in the studio, and saw some watercolors Sylvia did in spare time, little impressionistic views and groups of figures. He was interested. He said she was wasting her time at Julien's. She began to study color and composition. Several people had thought highly of her work. It had a whimsical, ironical delicacy. But, of course, there was no money in it. Even the really clever men with an established reputation among connoisseurs had a hard enough time of it. What hope was there for a girl? Being a girl was against her, even if she had been as good as Matisse or Cézanne, who were practically starving. The dealers looked upon pictures as so many stock-exchange shares, puffed up reputations for the sake of the English and American buyers, thinking only of the sous. It was all a sordid speculation and money-grubbing, full of tricks and cheating. When she went round to dealers, hawking round her things, they said they might be very good, they didn't pretend to judge, but she wasn't quoted. A few francs, scarcely more than the price of the canvas and paints, was about all she could ever get. Her money gave out. With the little that was left and some loans from friends, Sylvia had come over to London. She had a notion that she might get some work on posters. Her style rather lent itself to poster work. She had been trying to get effects of depth and light, and modelling with plain, flat colors. She went round to agents and advertisers. No, that wasn't the sort of thing that was wanted. An advertising poster must tell a story. It didn't very much matter about the drawing. People wanted an amusing story. "Something leggy," especially, something suggestive. That always attracted people's attention.

"I got pretty desperate, I can tell you," Sylvia said. "There seemed little else for me to do than to walk round Leicester Square or Lisle Street. As a last distracted attempt, I went round to the editor of an illustrated paper with some black and white sketches. They were quite trifling, trashy things, little fluffy women and marionette-like little men. Exactly the things I used to draw at school when I was twelve. The editor was pleased, thought it was an original idea, was much taken with it. And at once it took on tremendously. They had to double the printing of the paper. Since then I have been flooded with orders for little fluffy marionettes, orders from everywhere, from America, paying quite big fees. Often I have told editors that I could do much better things than that. But they would not hear about it. They wanted the fluffy little lady and the little mannikin. They did not want anything else. They could not have enough of them. So I do the little marionettes by the thousand, and people pay almost anything I want for them. Ridiculous, isn't it? That's what my art and my studying in Paris have come to. Doing the baby sketches I used to do when I was a little girl." She gave a little shrug and a dry, bitter laugh. *"Sale vie,* all the same. I'm prostituting my mind instead of my body, that's all."

A little flushed, she looked very smart, very attractive. The touch of defiant discontent added a certain distinction to her personality. Her face was a little harder, Julian thought, than it used to be when he had known her.

"You were inclined to look at the black side, I remember," he said. "Anyhow, I am glad to see that you are prosperous."

She had an impatient, disillusioned movement of her brows. The daylight was fading into purple, colored lanterns were lit among the trees, and beams of changing colors played in the fountain. They sat down on the terrace for dinner. Julian was in the mood to do himself well. They ordered mayonnaise hors d'œuvres and paprikas, and Wiener Schnitzel, and Julian insisted on champagne.

"And you are in this Rights of Women business, of course?" he said to Sylvia.

"Oh, not in any very active way," she said. "Mrs. Douglas was extremely good to me when I was in dire tight places. I can't forget that, however cranky she may be. She is full of that vote business now. Is always at me about it. I now and then attend meetings and give subscriptions—more to please her than for any other reason. Because, of course . . ."

"Pallier put it rather well, don't you think?" said Julian.

"Why, yes, it's perfectly obvious. Yes, your friend was quite brilliant," Sylvia said.

"He's a sound fellow. It's a treat when a person is consistent and clear. I'm beginning to think that is the essential, that all the rest follows," Julian said.

"That's why I am not really much interested in that vote business," said Sylvia. "It's quite superficial, clearly, almost childish. Those poor girls, they don't really understand anything, don't understand life . . ."

"The facts of life, you mean?" Julian smiled. "Pallier calls them the 'foolish virgins.'"

"Of course, that's it. A frustration-substitution," Sylvia said.

"Ah, you've been reading Freud, I see," Julian said, smiling.

"Doesn't need much psychology to make that out, does it? It's marriage and morals that keep women 'in their place,' not the vote or anything else."

They had got as far as the coffee. Julian offered Sylvia a cigarette. When she had drawn the first puff, she said: "That girl—what's her name?—Melway, threatening to undress—frustration hysteria, pretty obvious."

Julian laughed. "Oh, it was a safe gesture. She knew perfectly well that she was quite safe. It's always like that. People talk. They talk big about what they are prepared to do, so long as there is no danger of their doing it. It's all talk. When it comes to the point, people always knuckle down quietly to—to the sacrosanct conventions."

"Not always," said Sylvia over her cigarette. "Everything begins in talk. After people have got used to talking, they do things."

"Ah, it will take a long time to wriggle out of the mesh of the old sentiments and conventions," Julian said. "Women are least of all prepared to do so. You yourself, now, you would think twice before stepping out of them, whatever you may think or say about the humbug. It's all very well your talking about walking Lisle Street . . . sounds very picturesque . . . but you know quite well that nothing would induce you. You wouldn't even . . . Suppose I were to ask you now to . . . to sleep with me . . . you . . ."

"Yes, I would," Sylvia said. She was leaning over the table, smoking, her eyes looking away towards the trees and Chinese lanterns. Her face stiffened a little unnaturally.

Julian gave a little gasp, leaning forward. "You mean . . . that you would . . . ?"

"Why not?" she said, still looking away.

Julian looked at her a moment, motionless. He called the waiter and ordered a glass of Kirsch. "What's yours, crème de menthe?" he asked Sylvia.

"No, Chartreuse," she said, "green."

There was a silence till the waiter had gone after bringing the liqueurs.

"You see, it is you who are shocked," she said, turning to him with a flushed smile. "It is you who are in awe of the sacred superstitions, of the old edifice of the mythical conventions. Naturally. It's men who are impressed with the majestic, sacrosanct importance of masculine morality. Not women."

Julian, raising his glass, gave a little laugh, sheepishly. He was as usual, he told himself, disposed to be sentimental. He recalled the talk with Pallier, the other night, at his rooms. He had been looking at Sylvia with the old eyes of his calf-love, recalling the tremulous, timid excitement of that first kiss, that night at the Christmas party, thinking of her in the marlstone cottage with her books and watercolors, a trifle priggish and precise in her talk. Of course, she was changed; she was an emancipated young woman. Two years, knocking about in Paris, as an art student. One knew what that meant. Heaven knew how many casual affairs she had had, what her life had been. She was changed. Her face had grown harder. He too had changed—a great deal.

"Shall we go down to Brighton this week-end?" he said.

"Brighton! Heavens, how vulgar. What's the need of waiting for the week-end? Why not now, tonight?" she said.

"We'll go to your place, to your studio," he said.

"No. There's my landlady close by, and my maid, and neighbors. There's no good in giving people an opportunity of making themselves disagreeable. There're other places, hotels. Dear me, what a lot of fuss it takes to break the conventions," she said a little crossly, impatiently.

In the underground they were silent, mostly, and as they walked along the Strand, after it had stopped at the chemist's. Sylvia was quiet as they went up in the lift, and, Julian thought, a little nervous, though she tried to conceal it. He noticed that her hand shook as she stood, after he had turned the key of the door, removing her hat.

He looked exultant at her as she stood awaiting his initiative. Oh, there was no occasion, in her case, for scruples or delicate pretences. Sylvia gasped a little at the abruptness of his approach, but opposed no word or gesture. Unchecked, his hands, his eyes had their will. Her face was tremulously blank, her eyes half-closed. Would that the little head could have yielded its secret as did the white disorder, to his scrutiny.

She came to his aid, quickly undoing her corset, as he fumbled ineffectually. He kissed, drawing the lawn apart, her belly, with the finger-nail imprint of the navel, the dark pubescence. Hurriedly he undressed. Masterfully, he conquered the delightful flesh in the spasm of convulsive joy.

Sylvia remained passive. She bit her lip, silently, with the pain. In the quiet that followed, Sylvia turned her face to the pillow and broke into tears.

"What is it, dear, what is it?" Julian asked.

"Nothing, nothing, it's only nerves," she said. She looked up, smiling with an effort through her tears.

"Are you sorry?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No," she said, getting her handkerchief. She wiped her eyes and sat up. "Don't take any notice," she said. "It's only nerves. I'm a little hysterical, I suppose."

A little later he asked her: "Why didn't you tell me that . . . that you were a virgin? I thought, you know, that . . ."

Sylvia gave a little laugh. They were sitting on the edge of the bed. Her breasts stood out firm as she drew back her hair.

"Once in Paris," she said, "I wanted to give myself to a boy, one of the students at the École des Beaux Arts. It took me quite a big effort, but I didn't want to appear silly. When he found that I was a virgin, he apologised, politely, deferentially. I felt so humiliated."

"Well, fancy," Julian laughed.

"It's an idea they have. Part of their idea of *'la famille,'* the sacred rights. Adultery with married women, as much as you please. But a *jeune fille,* even a rake hesitates. Tradition, tradition. Frenchmen are frightfully conventional."

"So, you didn't want to run any risks this time?" They laughed at the unfinished thought. She was gay now. He was joyful of her naked body.

"We'll have breakfast brought up in the morning," he said, "it will be fun."

"No, no," she said, "I must not stay all night. It would be noticed. Presently we'll take a cab, and you will see me home to my place."

In the little studio in Hampstead, secluded behind the untrimmed planes of a neglected garden, where he got into the habit of dropping in, Julian found delightful hours. But he kept on his guard against yielding too emotionally to the charm. So did Sylvia. She kept him off in a sentimental sense, while yielding physically to his desire. It meant little to her. Was that all? It was so little of her, after all. But she was prudish of herself, her individual person, jealously on her guard of her independence. She was as comradely and confiding as she would have been to Julian had no such thing as physical intimacy existed between them. But no more. It made no difference. There was an intimacy between them of which that other intimacy was not a part. Sylvia, with a touch of defiance, would declare herself. "You must not consider," she said, "that I am your mistress."

It was reasonable enough, he thought. Had it not been a quite unpremediated adventure, a momentary impulse, a defiant wager even, little more than a gesture? And if the relation continued, there was no reason why it should either bind them in any way or estrange them.

He would lounge with a book while Sylvia worked at her drawings. They would spend hours, talking as they felt inclined, or in the equal intimacy of unconstrained silence, or would talk endlessly. Sometimes they would go out to dine, or to a show. They went, one week, to the Isle of Wight. Those were their most successful days together. Almost, Julian had the illusion that she gave herself to him. They wandered and ran on the grassy, wind-swept cliffs at Freshwater Bay, in youthful exuberance.

But Sylvia, after that flash of abandonment, seemed to retract only more deeply within the bulwarks of her being. No, she never really gave herself. She did not surrender the conscious defences of her independent being, and could not therefore surrender her body. The full yielding of herself, the surrender that is called love, could, on the other hand, not be real without the physical surrender. It was a vicious circle, within which mind and body were caught, each frustrated. Julian called to mind one of Pallier's sallies as he talked with Sir Anthony.

"The basic difference between men and women," he said in biological terms, "is that the sexual orgasm is with men functional, whereas it is with women a secondary adaptation." Julian, whose own defences against sentiment were often, in the soothing refuge of Sylvia's companionship, on the point of breaking down, could not help feeling the recoil of her own guarded independence, which produced in him something akin to resentment, to exacerbated antagonism. Sylvia's defensive unparticipation intensified the very thing, the masculine masterfulness, against which she defended herself. Julian's possession of her was rendered more alien, more lustful, more sadistic. He found gratification in subjecting her, in the indignities which he inflicted upon her. Indifferently compliant, she yielded to his caprices with unconcerned acquiescence, branding them with the tacit disdain of her tolerance.

Sylvia struck up a friendship with Margaret Melway. Julian would constantly come upon Margaret in the studio. He felt at times, when he dropped in and found the young women in intimate conversation, as if he were an intruder.

Julian would twit Sylvia. "You are a little—what shall I say?—*déséquilibrée,* you know."

Sylvia's face would harden a little. "Oh, I don't think so. Or perhaps we all are. How can one help it, how can one be normal in the hellish confusion of this world of transition?"

"You think it's 'transiting'? You think it will transit?" he asked.

"Of course, of course. It's all falling to pieces, all the foundations, the ideas, the sentiments, the relationships. It began to break up in the *fin de siècle.* Oscar Wilde crumbling down, and then turning, bewildered, to mawkishness, was a sympton. I used to pass the little hôtel in the Rue des Beaux Arts where he died, poor devil. One of the last public autos-da-fè of infuriated bourgeois puritanism. I hear that they are trying to get up subscriptions for a monument to him at Père Lachaise, now. But everything is groping, groping distractedly for a new direction. Art, for instance. One knows well enough that all the old stuff, the Bouguereau cow-women, and Venice by moonlight, and the pretty-pretty Christmas annual pictures that delighted the hearts of the good old English bourgeoisie, are as dead as mutton. But one does not know yet what exactly is to take their place. Cubists, futurists, post-futurists—all *déséquilibrés,* aren't they? Groping and staggering because the old rotten foundations, the false sentiments have given way. It's the same with sex, I take it. Those women with their franchise, sapping the foundations of the holy family, without exactly knowing what they are about. It's all groping, groping, and an unholy muddle, just as with the cubist and futurist experimenters."

"Everything goes together, of course," Julian said. "If sex is muddled, art is muddled. If art is muddled, that's because sex is."

"They are all *détraqués,* even the greatest," said Sylvia. "Gauguin had to run away to Tahiti to keep himself from going stark staring mad. Lautrec, raving with delirium tremens, had to be sent to a nursing home. Utrillo is never sober; Modigliani takes to hashish. Van Gogh committed suicide. All driven crazy by the intolerable as soon as they try to be genuine. Rodin has lost his head completely. He is a raving erotomaniac. Does statues and smashes them to pieces, then sends the broken bits to an exhibition. He models the most fantastically gross, obscene figures—things you would gloat over—then shows them to the elegant *grandes dames* whom he invites to his studio, slavering with lubricity. *Un vrai satyre lubrique."*

"I didn't know he had so much in him. He's not castrated, at any rate," Julian said.

Sylvia puffed at her cigarette defiantly. "We are getting oversophisticated," she said. . . .

NOTE ON ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S

"FRÄULEIN ELSE"

The scene opens at the resort of San Martino, where Fräulein Else, a girl of twenty-two, is staying with her aunt, whom she serves as a kind of companion. Else comes of a family of great pretensions but one that is in perpetual financial difficulties. She is distressed by the thought that she may never marry for love; hence, in a pained yet light manner, she accepts the attentions of the Filous, *that is, the worthless adventurers.*

Else has become acquainted with a rather vulgar millionaire, von Dorsday, who is staying at the hotel. Her family urgently need 30,000 gulden to avoid a shameful bankruptcy, and they think that she can get the money from von Dorsday. Else receives a letter from them, filled with cleverly concealed innuendoes but threatening tragedy if the money is not forthcoming. She knows what von Dorsday will demand as the condition of his generosity.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Fräulein Else

Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), a Viennese of Viennese, is known equally for his fiction and drama. For years he edited a clinical magazine (he was a physician), before he turned his entire energy to literature. Author of many brilliant salon pieces, erotic novels, and risqué plays, he altered his style at sixty to produce five short novels of contemporary concepts. *Fräulein Else* (1924) is the most celebrated of these works. A French critic, impressed with Schnitzler's stylistic perfectionism, observed that "he made a medley of modern themes to caress the ears of the delicate." For this Viennese artist, woman is a religion whose cult the writer celebrates. But which woman? Usually one of leisure, either bought or ill treated. Even when he turned, in his later years, to writing about poorer women, the story was essentially the same: woman loves, she is a function of her femininity, and through that she is saved. Man always defeats her externally, but she is the victor, because he was playing whereas she was involved. To Schnitzler everything men and women do is a game: there is no other valid aspect to life or love.

ON the fifth, you say, Fräulein Else?"—Thank God! At least he's saying something. "Yes indeed. At noon of the day after tomorrow, Herr von Dorsday. Therefore, it'll be necessary to—I don't believe it could be done so late by letter."—*"Of course not, Fräulein Else. We'll have to telegraph."*—"We"—that's good. That's very good. —*"Well, that would be the least of it. How much did you say, Else?"* —He's heard me say it. Why does he torture me? "Thirty thousand, Herr von Dorsday. Really an absurdly small amount." Why did I say that? How stupid! But he's smiling. Stupid girl, he thinks. He's smiling quite amiably. Father is saved. He'd as soon lend me fifty thousand and then we could get ourselves all kinds of things. New chemises for me. How selfish I am! One gets that way—*"Not quite so absurd, my dear child—"* Why does he say "dear child"? Is it a good sign or not? *"—as you imagine. Even thirty thousand gulden have to be earned."*— "Pardon me, Herr von Dorsday. I didn't mean it that way. I thought only how sad it was that Father—because of such a small amount—"

Oh, Lord, I'm bungling it again! "You can't imagine, Herr von Dorsday, even if you have some knowledge of our circumstances, how terrible it is for me, and more especially for Mother."—He's putting a foot on the bench. Is that supposed to be good form, or what? —*"Oh, I can imagine it easily, dear Else."*—How his voice sounds! Altogether different. Remarkable.—*"And I've often thought: a pity about this brilliant man."*—Why does he say "a pity." Won't he give the money? No; he's merely generalizing. Why doesn't he say "Yes" once and for all—or does he take that for granted? How he stares at me! Why doesn't he say more? Oh, because the two Hungarian ladies are passing by. At least he's resumed a decent attitude now. The foot's no longer on the bench. The cravat's too bright for an elderly gentleman. Does his mistress select them for him? Nothing very fine, "between you and me," Mother writes. Thirty thousand gulden. But I'm smiling at him. Why am I smiling? Oh, I'm so cowardly!—*"If one really could take it for granted that something might be done with this amount. But—you're a clever creature, Else. What would thirty thousand gulden be? A drop in the bucket."*—Oh, Heavens! Doesn't he want to give the money? I mustn't look so frightened. Everything depends on this. Now I must say something intelligent and convincing. "Oh, no, Herr von Dorsday, this time it would be no mere drop in the bucket. The Erbesheimer case is at hand. Don't forget that, Herr von Dorsday, and today it's as good as won. And Father has other cases, too. Furthermore, I intend—you mustn't laugh, Herr von Dorsday—to talk very seriously to Father. He takes me seriously. I may say that if there's one person who can influence him, it is—" *"You certainly are a delightful creature, Fräulein Else."*—His voice has that ring again. How disagreeable it is when men begin to "ring" this way. I don't like it in Fred, either.—*"A delightful creature, upon my word."*—Why does he say "upon my word"? It's banal. It sounds like a small-town theatre.—*"But gladly as I would share your optimism—once the cart has gone astray."*—"Not this time, Herr von Dorsday. If I didn't believe completely in Father, if I weren't completely convinced that these thirty thousand gulden—" I don't know what to say now. I can't exactly beg. He's thinking it over. Obviously. Perhaps he doesn't know Fiala's address. Nonsense. The situation is impossible. I sit here like a poor sinner. He stands before me and puts his monocle into his eye and says nothing. I'll leave now. That'll be best. I won't be treated this way. Father may kill himself. I'll kill myself, too. It's a shameless life. It would be best to jump from that cliff and have it over with. It would serve everyone right. I'll go.—*"Fräulein Else."*—"Pardon me, Herr von Dorsday, for bothering you at all. Everything considered, I can readily understand your inclination to refuse." So. I'm through.—*"Stay,* *Fräulein Else."*—Stay? Why should I stay? He'll give the money. Yes, of course. He must. But I won't sit down again. I'll remain standing as though I were going in half a second. I'm a little taller than he is.—*"You haven't waited for my answer, Else. Once before—pardon me, Else, for referring to it in this connection—"* He needn't say "Else" so often—*"I've been in a position to help your father out of a difficulty. To be sure, that was an—even more absurd sum than the present one—and I didn't flatter myself with the hope of ever seeing the money again. So there really seems to be no reason for refusing my assistance this time—and especially when a young girl like you, Else, comes in person as an intermediary."*—What is he driving at? His voice "rings" no longer. Or it has a different "ring." How he stares at me! He'd better be careful! —*"And so, Else, I'm prepared—Dr. Fiala shall have thirty thousand gulden at noon of the day after tomorrow, on one condition."*—He shouldn't say more. He's said quite enough. "Herr von Dorsday, I, I personally will guarantee that my father will return this sum as soon as he receives his fee from Erbesheimer. So far, Erbesheimer has paid nothing. Not even a retainer. Mother herself wrote that to me."—*"Let it be, Else. One never should undertake a guarantee for another. Not even for one's self."*—What does he want? His voice "rings" again. Never has anyone stared at me so! I suspect his intentions. He'd better be careful!—*"Could I have thought it possible an hour ago that I'd ever be in a position to dictate terms! And now I'm doing it. Yes, Else, after all, I'm only human and it isn't my fault that you're so beautiful, Else."*—What does he want? What does he want?—*"Perhaps I might have asked of you today or tomorrow what I ask of you now. Even if you hadn't sought a million—I beg your pardon, thirty thousand—gulden from me. But really, if things had been otherwise, you hardly would have given me this opportunity to speak with you alone."*—"Oh, I really have taken up too much of your time already, Herr von Dorsday."—That was well said. Fred would have been satisfied with it. What's this? Is he reaching for my hand? What's the matter with him?—*"Haven't you been aware of it for a long time, Else?"*—He should let go of my hand. Now, thank Heaven, he's let go of it. Not so close. Not so close.—*"You wouldn't be a woman, Else, if you didn't notice it. Je vous désire."* —He didn't have to say that in French, the noble Vicomte.—*"Must I say more?"*—"You've said quite enough, Herr von Dorsday." I'm still standing here. Why? I'll leave. I'll leave without a word.—*"Else, Else."*—Now he's next to me again. —*"Forgive me, Else. I too have only been joking, just as you did a little while ago, about the million. My demand, too, shall not be so exorbitant—as you may have feared. So that the lesser demand will, perhaps, be a pleasant surprise. Please stay, Else."*—And I actually remain here! Why? Here we are, facing each other. Shouldn't I simply have slapped his face? Wouldn't there still be time for that now? The two Englishmen are passing. This would be the very minute. Right now. Why didn't I do it? I'm cowardly. I'm broken. I'm humiliated. What will he want now in place of the million? A kiss, perhaps. That might be considered. A million is to thirty thousand as—there are some funny comparisons.—*"If you really need a million some day, Else, you may be certain that I'll see to it, although I'm not a rich man. But this time I shall be reasonable, as you are. And this time I wish nothing more, Else, than—to see you."*—Is he crazy? He sees me.—Oh, he means it *that* way! Why don't I slap his face? The rotter! Have I turned red or pale? You want to see me naked? Many would like that! I'm beautiful when I'm naked. Why don't I slap his face? It's enormous. Why so close, you rotter? I don't want your breath on my cheeks. Why don't I just leave him? Are his eyes holding me? We glare at each other like deadly enemies. I'd like to call him a rotter to his face, but I can't. Or don't I want to?—*"You look at me as though I were crazy, Else. Perhaps I am slightly so. For there's a magic in you, Else, that you yourself can't realize. You must understand, Else, that my request implies no insult. Yes—request, I say. Though to you it may seem dangerously like coercion. But I'm no coercionist. I'm only a man who has had many experiences—among others, this: that everything in the world has its price, and that anyone who gives away his money when he might receive a return for it is a consummate fool. And—parting with what I wish to buy this time, Else, much as it is, will not make you poorer. And that the transaction will remain a secret between you and me, Else—that I swear to you by—by all the charms whose revelation will make me happy."*—Where did he learn to talk like that? It sounds like a book.—*"And I swear to you that I will never take any unfair advantage of the situation created by our agreement. I ask of you only to be allowed to stand for a quarter of an hour in contemplation of your beauty. My room is on the same floor as yours, Else. Number Sixty-five. Easy to remember. The Swedish tennis player you mentioned today—wasn't he just sixty-five years old?"*—He's crazy. Why do I let him go on? I'm paralyzed.—*"But if for any reason you don't care to visit me in room Number Sixty-five, Else, then I suggest a little stroll after dinner. There's a clearing in the woods. I discovered it by chance the other day. Hardly five minutes from our hotel.—It will be a wonderful summer night, almost warm, and the starlight will clothe you divinely."*—He speaks as he would to a slave. I feel like spitting in his face.—*"You need not answer immediately, Else. Think it over. After dinner, you may render your decision."*—Why does he say "render"? What a stupid word: "render."—*"Think* *it over calmly. Perhaps you'll come to the conclusion that I'm not merely driving a bargain with you."*—What else, you whining rotter! —*"Perhaps you'll suspect that a man is speaking to you, a man who is rather lonesome and not particularly happy, and who, perhaps, deserves a little sympathy."*—Affected rotter! He speaks like a poor actor. His manicured fingers look like claws. No! No! I won't! Why don't I tell him so? Kill yourself, Father. What is he doing with my hand? My arm's quite limp. He draws my hand to his lips. Hot lips. Augh! My hand's cold. I'd like to knock his hat off. Ha, how funny that would be! Had your fill of kissing, you rotter?—The arc lamps in front of the hotel are already lighted. Two windows are open in the third story. The one in which the curtain is stirring is mine. Something's shining on the cabinet. There's nothing on it. Only a brass ornament—*"So, auf Wiedersehen, Else."*—I don't answer. I stand here motionless. He looks into my eyes. My face is blank. He knows nothing. He doesn't know whether I'll come or not. Neither do I. I only know that everything's over. I'm half dead. There he goes. A little bent. Rotter! He senses that I'm staring after him. Whom is he greeting? Two ladies. He bows as if he were a Count. Paul ought to challenge him and shoot him. Or Rudi. What does he think anyway? Brazen fellow! Never, never! There's nothing left to do, Father. You'll have to kill yourself.—The couple obviously is returning from a trip. Both handsome, he and she. Have they time to change their clothes before dinner? They're surely on their honeymoon—or perhaps they aren't married at all. I'll never go on a honeymoon. Thirty thousand gulden. No, no, no. Aren't there thirty thousand gulden somewhere in the world? I'll go to see Fiala. Mercy, mercy, Dr. Fiala. With pleasure, my dear young lady. And there's my bedroom.—Please, Paul, do me a favor. Ask your Father for thirty thousand gulden. Tell him you have gambling debts. That otherwise you must shoot yourself. "Gladly, my dear cousin. My room is Number So-and-so, and I'll expect you at midnight." Oh, Herr von Dorsday, how modest you are. For the time being, at least. Now he's dressing, putting on a smoking jacket. Now we each go our own way. The meadow by moonlight or Room Number Sixty-five. Will he wear his smoking jacket when he's in the woods with me?

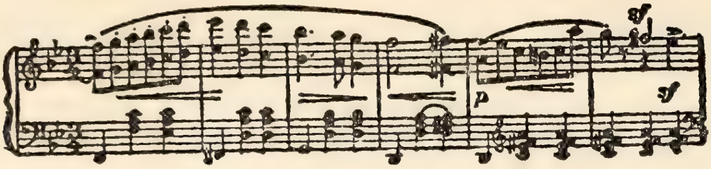
There's still time before dinner. A little walk. Let's think it over calmly. I'm a lonesome old man—ha, ha! Heavenly air, like champagne. It's no longer cool.—Thirty thousand . . . thirty thousand. . . . I must look very pretty in this wide landscape. Too bad there aren't more people in the clearing. Obviously I'm attractive to the gentleman out there near the edge of the wood. Oh, my dear sir, I'm even more beautiful naked, and the price is laughable. Thirty thousand gulden.

Perhaps you'll bring your friends with you. Then it'll be cheaper for each one. Let's hope you have many handsome friends, handsomer and younger than Herr von Dorsday. Do you know Herr von Dorsday? He's a rotter. Vile rotter. . . .

Oh, I must think it over. . . . A human life is at stake. Father's life. But no—he won't kill himself. He'd rather be imprisoned. Three years at hard labor—or five. He's been living in terror of this for five or ten years. . . . Trust funds. . . . And Mother, too. And even I.—For whom will I have to strip next time? Or shall we make permanent arrangements with Herr von Dorsday for simplicity's sake? His present mistress is nothing very fine. "Just between you and me." He'd certainly prefer me. I'm not at all sure that I'm so much finer. Don't take on airs, Fräulein Else. I could tell tales about you. . . .

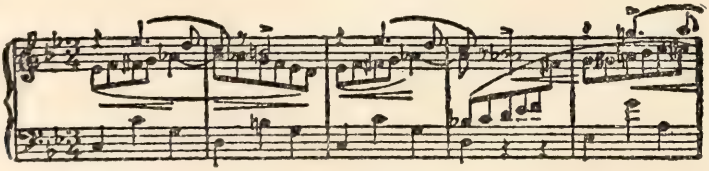
"Else!"—For Heaven's sake, my aunt! I'd better keep right on walking. *"Else!"*—I must turn around. There's no way out. "Oh, good evening, Aunt."—*"Oh, Else, what's wrong with you? I was just about to go up to you. Paul told me—Oh, how you look!"* "How do I look, Aunt? I'm feeling quite well. I just ate something." She notices something.—*"Else—you have—you have no stockings on!"*—"What did you say? My soul, I have no stockings on! No—!"—*"Aren't you well, Else? Your eyes—you have temperature."*—"Temperature? I think not. I've just had the worst headache of my life."—*"You must go to bed at once, child; you're deathly pale."*—"That's on account of the bad light. Everybody looks pale in this hall." She looks at me so strangely. She can't notice anything? Now, I must keep my poise. All's over with Father if I lose my poise. I must say something. "Do you know, Aunt, what happened to me in Vienna a little while ago? I went out walking with one yellow shoe and one black one." Not a word of it's true. I must keep on talking. What'll I say now? "Do you know, Aunt, I sometimes have attacks of absentmindedness. Mother used to have them, too." Not a word of it's true.—*"In any case, I'll send for the doctor."*—"But please, Aunt! There isn't one in the hotel. They'll have to call one from the next town. He certainly would laugh if he were called because I had no stockings on. Haha." I oughtn't to laugh so loudly. My aunt's face is distorted with fear. The thing's too weird for her. Her eyes are popping out.—*"Tell me, Else, have you by any chance seen Paul?"*—Ah, she's looking for help. Poise. Poise. Everything depends on it. "I think he's walking in front of the hotel with Cissy Mohr, if I'm not mistaken."—*"In front of the hotel? I'll call them both in. We'll all have a little tea. Yes?"*—"Gladly." What a stupid face she makes! I nod at her quite amiably and innocently. She's gone. Now I'll go to my room. No; what'll I do in my room? It's high

time. High time. Fifty thousand. Fifty thousand. Why am I hurrying so? Slowly. Slowly. . . . What do I want? What's the man's name? Herr von Dorsday. Funny name. . . . Here's the card room. Green curtain over the door. They see nothing. I'll stand on tiptoe. A game of whist. They play every evening. Two gentlemen are playing chess over there. Herr von Dorsday isn't here. Victory! Saved! But how so? I must look further. I'm condemned to look for Herr von Dorsday till the end of my life. Probably he's looking for me too. We always miss one another. Perhaps he's looking for me upstairs. We'll meet on the steps. The Dutch people are staring at me again. The daughter is very pretty. The old gentleman has spectacles, spectacles, spectacles. . . . Fifty thousand. That's not so much, fifty thousand, Herr von Dorsday. Schumann? Yes, Carnival. I once studied that myself. She plays well.

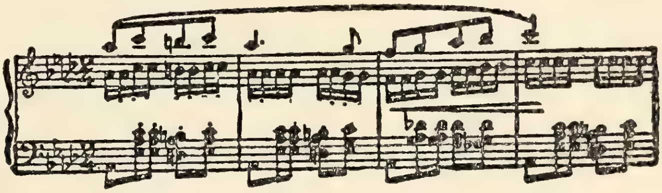


But why she? Perhaps it's a he. Perhaps it's a virtuoso. I'll take one look into the music room.

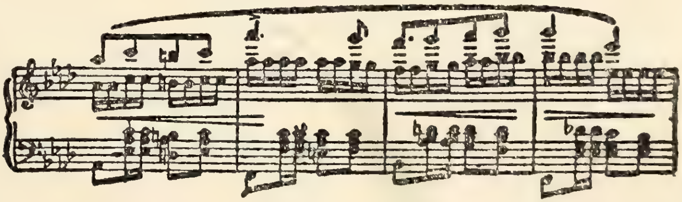
Yes, there's the door.—Dorsday! I'm falling. Dorsday! He's standing at the window, listening. Is it really possible? I'm burning up—I'm going insane—I'm dead—and he's listening to a strange lady playing piano. Two gentlemen are sitting on the divan. The blond one just arrived today. I saw him get out of the carriage. The lady's no longer young. She's been here for a couple of days. I didn't know that she played piano so beautifully. She's well off. All people are well off . . .



only I am doomed . . . Dorsday! Dorsday! Is that really he? He doesn't see me. Now he looks like a decent person. He's listening. Fifty thousand. Now or never. Open the door softly. Here I am, Herr von Dorsday! He doesn't see me. I'll signal to him just once with my eyes; then I'll raise the coat a little. That'll be enough. After all, I'm a young girl. A decent young girl. A decent young girl from a good family. Not a prostitute. . . . I want to go away. I want to take veronal and sleep. You've made a mistake, Herr von Dorsday. I'm no prostitute. Adieu, adieu! . . . Oh, he's looking up. Here I am, Herr von Dorsday. What eyes he's making. His lips tremble. His eyes are burning into my forehead. He doesn't suspect that there's nothing beneath the coat. Let me go. Let me go. His eyes are shining. His eyes are threatening. What do you want of me? You're a rotter. Nobody sees me—except him. They're listening. So come then, Herr von Dorsday! Don't you notice anything? There in the fauteuil—great God, in the fauteuil—there's the Filou! Heaven be praised! He's here again. He's here again! He was only on a trip and now he's here again. The Roman head is here again. My bridegroom, my beloved! But he doesn't see me. Nor should he see me. What do you want, Herr von Dorsday? You look at me as though I were your slave. I'm not your slave. Fifty thousand! Does our agreement still hold, Herr von Dorsday? I'm ready. Here I am. I'm quite calm. I'm smiling. You understand my look? His eyes say to me: come! His eyes say: I want to see you naked. Well, you swine, I *am* naked. What more do you want? Send the message . . . immediately. Chills are running up and down my spine. She's playing on. How wonderful it is to be naked. Chills are running



up and down my spine. She's playing on. She doesn't realize what's happening here. Nobody realizes it. No one sees me yet. Filou! Filou!



Here I'm standing naked! Dorsday opens his eyes wide. At last he believes it. The Filou gets up. His eyes are glowing. You understand me, beautiful youth. "Ha, ha." The lady is playing no more. Father is saved. Fifty thousand! Address remains Fiala! "Ha, ha, ha!" Who's laughing there? Am I laughing? "Ha, ha, ha!" What are all those faces around me? "Ha, ha, ha!" How stupid of me to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha!" I don't want to laugh—I don't want to. "Ha, ha!"—*"Else!"*—Who's calling Else? That's Paul. He must be behind me. I feel his breath on my bare back. My ears are ringing. Perhaps I'm already dead. What do you wish, Herr von Dorsday? Why are you so enormous, and why are you staggering towards me? "Ha, ha, ha!"

Now what have I done? What have I done? What have I done? I'm falling. All is over. Why has the music stopped? An arm is supporting my back. That's Paul. Where's the Filou? I'm lying here. "Ha, ha, ha!" The coat's thrown over me and I'm lying here. The people think me unconscious. No, I'm not unconscious. I'm in all my senses. I'm a hundred times awake, a thousand times awake. Only, I always have to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha!" Now you have your wish, Herr von Dorsday. You must send the money to Father, immediately. "Haaaaah!" I don't want to cry out and I always have to cry out. Why must I cry out?—My eyes are closed. No one can see me. Father is saved.—*"Else!"*—That's my aunt.—*"Else! Else!"*—*"A doctor, a doctor!"*—*"Run for the porter!"*—*"What's happened?"*—*"It's impossible."*—*"The poor child."*—What are they talking about there? What's all this murmuring? I'm no poor child. I'm happy. The Filou has seen me naked. Oh, I'm so ashamed! What have I done? Never again will I open my eyes. —*"Please close the door."*—Why close the door? What a murmur! A thousand people are crowding around me. They'll think I'm unconscious. I'm not unconscious. I'm only dreaming.—*"Try to calm yourself, my dear lady."*—*"Has a doctor been sent for?"*—*"It's a fainting spell."*—How far away they all are. They're all speaking from Cimone. —*"We can't let her lie on the floor."*—*"Here's a shawl."*—*"A blanket."* —*"A blanket, or a shawl—it's all the same."*—*"Quiet, please."*—*"On the divan."*—*"Will you please close that door!"*—*"Don't be so nervous. It's already closed."*—*"Else! Else!"*—If my aunt would only be quiet! —*"Do you hear me, Else?"*—*"Don't you see, Mother, that she's unconscious?"*—Yes, thank God, to you I'm unconscious and I'll remain unconscious.—*"We must take her up to her room."*—*"What's happened here, for God's sake?"*—Cissy. How does Cissy happen to be in the meadow? Ah, but it isn't the meadow.—*"Else!"*—*"Please be quiet."* —*"Please step back a bit."*—Hands, hands under me. What do they want? How heavy I am. Paul's hands. Go away, go away. The Filou's near me; I can feel it. And Dorsday's gone. They must look for him. He mayn't kill himself before he has sent off the fifty thousand. My good people, he owes me money. Arrest him.—*"Have you any idea from whom the message was, Paul?"*—*"Good evening, my good people."*—*"Else, do you hear me?"*—*"Just let her be, Frau Cissy."*—*"Oh, Paul."*—*"The manager says it may be four hours before the doctor arrives."*—*"She looks as though she were sleeping."*—I'm lying on the divan. Paul is holding my hand. He is feeling my pulse. Right. After all, he's a physician.—*"She's not at all in danger, Mother, An—attack."* —*"I won't stay in this hotel a day longer."*—*"Please, Mother."*—*"We'll *leave promptly tomorrow morning."—"It will be easier to take her over the servants' stairway. The stretcher will be here immediately."*—Stretcher? Haven't I already been on a stretcher today? Haven't I already been dead? Do I have to die again?—*"Won't you please see to it, Herr Director, that the people at least stand clear of the door?"*—*"Please don't worry so, Mother."—"It's terribly inconsiderate of all these people."*—Why are they all whispering? It's like a death chamber. The stretcher will be here at once. Open the gate, Sir Matador.—*"The path is clear."—"The people might at least have as much consideration as to—"—"Please, Mother, please calm yourself."—"Please, my dear lady."—"Won't you look after my mother for a while, Frau Cissy?"*—She's his mistress, but she isn't as beautiful as I am. What's that again? What's happening there? They're bringing in the stretcher. I can see it with closed eyes. That's the stretcher for the injured. They laid Dr. Zigmondi on it when he fell off the Cimone. And now I'm to lie on the same stretcher. I fell too. "Ha!" No, I won't cry out again. They're whispering. Who's bending over my head? It smells like cigarettes. His hand is under my head. Hands under my back. Hands under my legs. Go away, all of you. Don't touch me. Shame, shame! What do you want, anyway? Leave me alone. It was only for Father.—*"Please, carefully, so, slowly."—"The shawl?"—"Yes, thank you, Frau Cissy."*—Why is he thanking her? What has she done for him? What will they do to me? Oh, how good, how good! I'm shivering, shivering. I'm shivering all over. They're carrying me, carrying me. They're carrying me to my grave. —*"Oh, I'm used to that, Doctor. Heavier people have already lain on the stretcher. Once last fall, there were even two."—"Sssh, ssh."—"Perhaps you'd be so good as to go ahead, Frau Cissy, and see that everything in Else's room is in order."*—What right has Cissy to go in my room? The veronal! The veronal! If only they don't pour it out. If they did that I'd have to jump out of the window.—*"Thank you very much, Herr Director, don't bother further."—"I'll take the liberty of inquiring again later on."*—The steps are squeaking. The carriers are wearing heavy mountain-boots. Where are my patent leathers? Back in the music room. They'll be stolen. I wanted to will them to Agatha. Fred gets my fountain pen. They're carrying me, they're carrying me. Funeral procession. Where's Dorsday, the murderer? He's gone away, and so has the Filou. He has gone away too. He has gone back to his wanderings. He came back just for a glimpse of my white body. And now he's gone away again. He's going on a hazardous path between rocks and precipices. Farewell, farewell.

NOTE ON HENRY DE MONTHERLANT'S

"PITY FOR WOMEN"

Pierre Costals, a successful novelist living in the most fashionable quarter of Paris, receives shoals of letters from adoring female readers, most of them written in anguish and many in self-abasement—but he rarely answers them. One of these adorers, Andrée, comes to Paris, and Costals manages to make her actually enjoy returning to her home, after he has had what he wants.

Costals travels to the Riviera and plays with his illegitimate son by a former mistress. Andrée, however, has now grown resentful. She assaults him with letters. In his boredom with the whole business, Costals turns to a young girl, Solange Dandillot, and sets his cap for her.

HENRY DE MONTHERLANT

Pity for Women

The most insolent writer of our time, Henry de Montherlant (born in France in 1896), is the foe of womankind and has pictured women in love only as the stupid prey of brutal, intelligent males. He began with the conception that "ideologists," the "men with spectacles," are feminine; that the life of ideas is effete; that art becomes sane only with bodily realization through sport and danger. (He ultimately supported French Fascism.) Since women have sensibilities directed toward satisfying their inner psychic needs, Montherlant regards them as limited and, therefore, inferior beings. A slipshod stylist, he delights in rough, ungrammatical effects; but he has a vehicle well adapted to portraying character as he conceives it. In *Pity for Women* (1935-7) his hero, Costals, is a writer and Solange one of a multitude of his women admirers. This excerpt begins at a concert. Montherlant is the only writer who not only pictures cads faithfully but openly sympathizes with their creed.

SO THEY came away from the temple of collective autosuggestion. Costals remembered that when he was twelve his grandmother had taken him to a temple of the same kind. *Le Malade malgré lui* was being played, and when it came to the scene where the actors pursued each other into the auditorium, the old lady, who from the beginning had shown signs of impatience, got up. "Let us go," she had said. "It is much too stupid." The impression on a child who even then was only too inclined to judge things for himself was unforgettable. They were a family with whom received ideas cut no ice.

He might have taken a taxi, but he preferred to see her home on foot. They both needed to collect themselves. He was so sure of getting whatever he wanted from her that he decided it would be useful to reserve himself a hope for the next time. What would be left to him of her when he had taken her? Besides, it was a principle with him that a man of a certain quality should allow some occasions to pass. Being used to having everything succeed with him, he plumed himself on risking his luck with unkind fate.

Not far from her home he stopped her underneath a street lamp and stood before her holding her by the upper part of her arms. No doubt she guessed that he was going to kiss her, for—timidity and modesty—she fell back a few steps so as to be in shadow. He drew her to him. Her arms hung limp and she did not lift up her face. As he bent down to kiss her on the mouth, she suddenly let her head fall, so low that Costals's mouth met only the ends of her hair. Putting his finger to her chin, he raised her head and kissed her on the forehead, without her making a gesture. Feeling a little set back, he began to walk on and she followed him. He had to force himself slightly so as to seem friendly as he asked: "Would you like to go to the Bois after dinner on Friday?" Her face showed that she was pleased, but she was quite calm as she agreed. "Your nose is shiny. Powder it," he said.

When Costals turned away from her after saying good-bye, Mlle Dandillot made no attempt whatever to do the classical thing and follow him with her eyes till he disappeared. She pressed the button on the main door, and as the elevator was not working, walked up the stairs. From the moment she began the ascent she had a painful intuition that she would not get to the fourth floor on which she lived without something happening that she feared but could not define. She went up, holding the banister with one hand and with the other touching the wall. Her bag swung against the wall and the leather of it got scratched by a nail. She reached her own door as an exhausted swimmer reaches a buoy, opened, and going to her room, sat down on the bed. "What's the matter with me?" she asked herself, frowning. The last of the midnight street-cars passing at full speed made a tremendous clatter down below. Her face contracted and she said aloud, "Oh, those cars!" Her face contracted again when she heard an automobile sounded. Then she thought she had left the electric light on, not only in the outer room, but even in rooms where she had not been. She went to see. Her whole body was now caught in a vibration analogous to that which shakes a steamer at moments when, as a result of pitching, the propeller is turning out of the water. She lay down, her hands clutching the edges of the mattress, and rolled first to the right and then to the left, like the corpse of a dog rolling in surf. She got up and proceeded to take off her dress with such impatience that she did not unclasp the hooks, so her head got stuck in it. She snatched a magazine off the table and tore it in two. Then, her face still contracted, she tore the pieces in two again. "Am I going to have a fit of hysteria?" Suddenly, she felt a turn in her stomach and felt, too, that she was going pale. She went to the glass with a kind of secret desire to give herself a fright. Then a violent heaving shot her towards the wash-basin and, holding on to that with one hand and pressing the other against her forehead, she vomited.

When she felt better she put on her nightdress and stretched herself on the bed without taking off her shoes. She got Costals's love confounded with the relief of having vomited. A sentence printed itself in her head, a mysterious and necessary sentence like the words printed on a phylactery: "He has left me in profound peace." It seemed to her that until the other day her whole life had been a great smooth, happy stretch. Then a shell had burst. And now the landscape was changed, upheaved. Yet the calmness and the light remained the same on that landscape. She turned over and stretched herself out completely on her stomach, in a position (very much little girl) that was familiar to her. She pushed her forearms under the bolster to seek the coolness there as one plunges one's forearms into the desert sand, which becomes colder and colder the deeper one descends. She said to herself again: "He has left me in profound peace," and kicked off her shoes by rubbing them against the edge of the bed. Then she went to a bookshelf and took down the novel Costals had given her. And she went to bed and put out the light, holding the book, which she slid under the sheet, with one finger placed between the pages. . . .

From time to time Costals cast a troubled glance at Solange. It was because of her he was here. It was the price of his love-affairs with women, when they were not women of the people, that he had to meet them in, or take them to, vile places—drawing-rooms, palatial hotels, night-clubs, theatres, fashionable watering-places. Oh, they knew quite well that what they had to do when they were with him was to affect to despise those places. They repeated what he said of them himself, only going further. Such fine indignation! But they had only to be seen in the haunts of pleasure, growing animated, expanding, displaying themselves; there was no hiding that this was what they loved, that it was here they felt alive—even the nicest and most honest of them, even the simplest of them. There was nothing to be done against the equation, woman = fussiness. And Costals's past was full of love-affairs that had become heavy, indeed poisonous, through the shame he felt at having, against his own impulses and in order to amuse the women, to keep them company in a way of life he disapproved of. Thirty years after a man has outgrown his adolescence, no matter how loving and devoted his parents may have been, he associates their memory *first of all* with infinitesimal grievances. "They made me do a year's law which was no use to me," or "They made me wear flannel vests at the height of summer." Similarly, though a woman might have given Costals basketfuls of joys, all the joys did not prevent him from thinking: "The days—not to speak of the money—I lost on her account! It was on her account, for instance, that—I still blush at the thought of it—I spent a week at Deauville." He did not, at the moment, resent it to Solange that he felt obliged, because of being with her, to dine at a more or less fashionable restaurant, but he carefully saved it up as a motive for resentment, and, if one may use the expression, generous resentment, so as to have it handy when the day came that he should want to get away from her.

Awhile ago, as the car brought them through the forest of Montmorency (and people in other cars they met laughed at the sight of him kissing her full on the mouth, and Costals laughed back at them in a complicity which was youthful and vulgar, and which he loved accordingly), awhile ago he had said to her: "After dinner, at the inn, supposing I take a room . . . would you come up for a minute or two?" And she had answered: "Yes." Always that "Yes." But now the dinner, begun in sulks, was not ending without a secret melancholy. There were occasions on which he had taken girls in a Jove-like gust of wind which left room for nothing but the glory of the abduction. On others, as now, he felt a sort of uneasiness at the thought that an act which was so important in the life of a virtuous woman was bound to be so much less important for him. And then he thought: "In an hour I shall know how she does it." Then curiosity would cease to sustain his feeling for her, and he wondered what would happen to that feeling once it was left to itself.

"Did your mother ask any awkward questions about what happened between us in the Bois the other evening?"

"Fortunately, no."

"If she had asked: 'How did he behave with you?' what would you have said?"

She remained silent.

"I see by your silence that you would have spared her no detail."

"I have never hidden anything from my mother."

"Well, that's a nice thing! . . . You have had a pretty education! . . ."

"I have never hidden anything from my mother because I had nothing to hide from her."

"Which means to say that if—Oh, I see that in spite of everything you have a little grain of intelligence."

But now an incident, analogous to the one the other day, occurred to charm him. A little girl of about five broke away from a group of diners who were seating themselves at a table. She came towards Solange, keeping her eyes on her with an expression of enchantment. When her mother came for her she cried, and afterwards she could not be made to eat because she would keep her eyes fixed on the girl. And Costals remembered what Solange had said to him about the almost mysterious attraction she had for children.

She went up to the room with great simplicity, without the slightest sign of being put out. He was struck by it and had a worrying thought (villainous? no, the thought of a man who has lived): "You'd think she had been doing nothing else all her life." At first there were great embraces that would have photographed well. These were on the balcony facing the greenery, which took on a chlorine tint from the lights of the lamps. The music of the orchestra came up from below. Costals was concentrating. "I must do it well. I must give her a beautiful memory, worthy of that old moon and those impudent violins. Let us get it well into our head that *éternité* is the anagram of *étreinte*. Let us give her a whiff of eternity as a trifling present."

Now she was naked on the bed, but she had kept on her shoes and her stockings, which she had turned down over her shoes. She had undressed at his request with no more coquetry than prudery, with the same naturalness and frankness as she had had coming upstairs with the hotel staff looking at her. Her legs were hairy, a charming thing in a young lady—within reason, that is.

She clasped the gentleman to her clumsily and without force, and the kisses she gave him—the first since they became acquainted with each other—were reserved and, it seemed, conventional. She looked as though she said to herself each time: "I must kiss him. They do that." But when, with his mouth on hers, he communicated the first elements of art in that sort of thing to her, he felt that among all these caresses she had at last found the one in which she was on her own line, in which she really had pleasure, and that now it was clear she had not wasted her day. For long minutes in that semi-official possession of mouths she gave herself quite as much as in possession under its official form.

When he asked: "Would you like me to switch on the light?" (her first gesture on entering the room had been to switch off the light, but the room was flooded with moonlight), she said: "No, I shouldn't like it," in a new voice changed by emotion, in the voice of a quite small girl, high and low at the same time, as though that voice came from very far away, as though it came from a tiny Dandillot of another age that had remained in the substratum of her being. Afterwards he called that voice her "night voice" because she only took it on during caresses—and the ship of caresses, when one is in it with little girls, always sails with lights out.

In Costals's eyes now there was nothing more of the body of Solange, nothing more of her than her face surrounded by her dishevelled hair, like the heart of a flower surrounded by its petals. It seemed as though the whole woman was no longer anything but that great corolla—a corolla woman. At first she lent herself to everything he wanted, but soon she began to cry: "No! No!" She cried for a longish time, with real sobs, while he stroked her without drawing away from her. He was saying to himself: "We know all that." Partly from a certain repugnance to hurting her, but more than anything in order to keep something of the unknown and the attractive for other occasions—while satisfying that coquetry he had of never seizing the occasion—when he let her go, she had only reached the point of being prepared. It is rare to be thus able to combine voluptuousness and virtue. Her sobs continued for a little while after he drew away from her, then became more rare, and finally ceased. But in him sensation still had the freshness of a new wound. They remained motionless and silent, lying beside each other, and he wondered whether she was not angry. Falsely ingenuous (it was a hypothesis his mind could not altogether reject), she might, perhaps, feel piqued at not having been taken completely. And on the other hand she might, in a small-girlish way, be a little cross with him for having taken her so far. But suddenly she turned her face and—cluck—she kissed him on the cheek. The noise of a frog leaping into the water.

He remained like that several minutes, silent at her side, and he began to take on height. There are exaltations, religious and otherwise, that arise from fasts. Others—by the identity of opposites—may arise in the process of digesting a rich repast, a process that transports us into a better world. With Costals it often happened that these exaltations took shape as soon as the carnal act was accomplished. They were then more intense the more he had given himself in the act. It may have been that by the act he emptied himself of all sensuality, and only his spiritual part remained in him. Or it may have been that he only had to stoop over a woman physically and the light went on in him, as when one attaches the cord to an electric plug and the light goes full on—the absolute of sensation followed by the absolute of sentiment. (Some souls go to the absolute as water goes to the sea.) Nearly everything that had inspiration in his work came to him during the minutes succeeding possession. Thus, lying beside Solange, it was of Thérèse he thought, and he saw her soul threatened (from the Catholic point of view), without her having the slightest idea in the world of it. However, he had had enough of pity for her and was tired of his pity.

The orchestra had stopped playing. The windows were wide open to the warm night and he could see the dark foliage (the lights had been put out). The leaves made a continuous noise as they stirred, like the noise of rain. Now it seemed to Costals that Andrée was at the foot of the bed with her despairing face. "I who feel, know, understand! I who have got to the heart of your work better than if I were yourself! And you refuse me what you give in overflowing measure to this insignificant little creature, simply because she was born pretty." The injustice of some of his acts often caused him a kind of enthusiasm —it is the pleasure God feels when He contemplates creation. But now he found it heavy. However, he was caressing Solange once more. Since it was understood that he was partial to his own advantage, there was no need to be circumspect. But he promised himself that he would write a nice letter to Andrée next day. (Incidentally, he did not do it, being occupied with religious thoughts that suggested themselves to him as a result of writing to Thérèse.)

She was less stupefied in the car than she had been the other evening. Several times she raised her head from her lover's bosom and silently looked into his eyes, as though, after it were over, she wished to become acquainted with this being to whom she had given herself. And beneath her gaze he was saying to himself: "My face is the face of a man of thirty-four, who reflects. The ugliness of those who think, or believe they think!" He remained thus, under her gaze, like a soldier forcing himself to keep his head above the parapet. The terrible nakedness of a man's face, without powder or paint, so courageous compared with the faces of women, always patched up. That lasted for what seemed to him a long time. Then she rested her head on his shoulder as if she were consenting for the second time.

As he felt he had a right to call her "thou" and she was still calling him "you," he smiled.

"Thou? You?"

Quite simply and without the slightest intention of being disobliging, she answered:

"I don't know how to say 'thou.' "

He liked that statement, seeing timidity and pride in it together—the statement of an infanta.

Suddenly, after a silence, she asked him point-blank:

"Do you really love me?"

Rather stupidly, without reflecting—and yet perhaps because at the back of his mind there was still the idea that she could not be sincere —he said:

"It is I who ought rather to ask you that."

She leaped up, and with violence, with a violence he had not known or suspected in her.

"You have no right to say that to me. Haven't I given you proofs enough?"

She was sitting up like a little serpent. "You have no right!" He would never have believed her capable of uttering such a word. Was it possible that she could be passionate? He also made a cruel remark to himself, a man's remark: "What proofs!"

"I," she began again, "I shall love you always. I know it. And you—how long?"

"A long time."

She frowned, and he said:

"When I was sixteen—sixteen, you hear—I had a little girl friend of fourteen. I loved her as one loves for the first time, which is to say with a fire one never recaptures. Of course she said the same thing to me that you have just said—it is a classical thing to say: 'With me it is for life. And you?' I answered: 'With me it is for as long as possible.' I loved her madly and I was sixteen, but I had that much clear-sightedness. It is hardly necessary to add that six months later we did not know each other any more. You see, I like reality." With a sound of passion in his voice he insisted: "I like to see what is. People say one is unhappy when one sees all that is too clearly. I see all that is and I am very happy. But because I know reality I know that one must never commit the future. What will your feelings be in a year? In six months? In three months? What will mine be? That is why I don't say 'always,' though as a matter of fact I find it quite natural in the mouth of a young girl. I am very much touched by it. I say 'a long time,' and I say it to you as a man who knows what 'a long time' means. And it means a great deal. To know that one will love a person for a long time is a great deal, believe me."

She did not answer.

When they parted he wanted to give her courage, and with a gentle smile he said:

"I don't feel a bit tired of you, you know. . . ."

Later he repented of being able to doubt her. It was not that he doubted her, strictly speaking. He believed that her heart was whole. He knew that her body was intact. But it was impossible for him not to juxtapose the "No! No!" and the tears and even the night voice, the unforgettable voice of the little schoolgirl, with all the trickeries of the loved sex. He was so convinced that Solange was "nature" that he found it almost vile of himself to doubt her at times, even though the doubt were, so to speak, forced. For it was Costals's past that injected a whole accumulation of knowledge into the present and modified his vision of Solange. And there was nothing to be done about it. Nothing could alter the fact that for him she was only the last, whereas for her he was the first. Nothing could alter the fact that he had known a great many copies before he knew the original, and that the original appeared less original after those copies. And whereas his attitude towards Andrée did not worry him in the least degree, he felt guilty in regard to Solange, though he was in the wrong in regard to her only in being what he was. So it comes about that everything turns to the advantage of what one loves.

But another feeling tended to make him doubt Solange. He was astonished that she could love him. Costals had no literary vanity, and one of the things he liked most in Solange was that she never talked to him about his books and never slipped in even the slightest word of admiration in talking to him. His vanity as a man was in eclipse. His first instinct was to assume that no woman he desired would refuse to give herself to him. But when one of them fell into his arms and gave him also something from the heart, he was disconcerted, and, in the words of Louis XV, said to himself: "I find it difficult to understand why they love me so much." Thus he savoured alternately the pleasure of believing himself invincible and the pleasure of discovering that he was humble—there is a time for everything, says the sage. It did not seem to him likely that Solange could really love him. "She is incapable of appreciating what is great and superior in me. The dear darling has the brain of a sandflea. So what can she find to love in me? And physically what is there worth having about me? No, it's not at all clear." He was forgetting that women move from affection to desire whereas men move from desire to affection. Thus two elements entered into his distrust, one which might be *stigmatized* as "the disillusionment of a surfeited man which corrupts all candour," and another which it is difficult not to describe as authentic modesty. His feeling therefore was partly good and partly bad. Like three-quarters of our feelings. Society will not have this. It wants clear-cut divisions so that people may *find their way among them*. But nature, liking nothing so much as confusion, will have things otherwise.

"Nothing will alter the fact of my being clear-sighted—and clear-sighted *always,*" he said to himself, dreaming over the "long time" he had opposed to her innocent assurance. "And, in addition, nothing will make me want not to be. My clear-sightedness frightens other people, but it does not frighten me. I am amused by it. It is a monster that I have tamed. Yet why 'a monster?' Let us say rather that it is my tutelary genius. It is thanks to that clear-sightedness that I lead a perfectly intelligent life, doing only what I know I can do and concentrating on that, never straying, not losing my time, not being taken in either by others or by myself, never letting people cause me suffering, and even being put out by them only very rarely. And as I join all the powers of imagination and poetry to that clear-sightedness, I rediscover the domain of dream through poetry, and through imagination the feelings of men who are not clear-sighted—which allows of my giving set vacations to my clear-sightedness when I wish and consider it good to do so. And thus I win on both planes. My life is not a superior life because, though my senses never fail, my mind, my character, and my heart are on the other hand full of lacunæ. But the elements are of those on which a superior life may be built up. As for my dear Dandillot, who is not me, what I ought to do is see that she does not suffer on my account, and I shall do that by now lying to her and now not lying to her, basing myself, not on principles, but according to the circumstances, on such instinct and delicacy as are revealed as necessary by my affection. It is possible that in other circumstances I might get her bewildered with illusions. But I had at least once to make her face what is, and can call it quits if, later, I shield her from a spectacle that it would be bad taste to impose unceasingly on a girl of twenty."

NOTE ON FRANCIS CARCO'S

"PERVERSITY"

Irma, a young Paris street-walker nicknamed "La Rouque," lives in a wretched apartment with her brother Emile, a clerk. Emile hears all that goes on in her room, for the dirty, vicarious thrill that it gives him. He has been married twice, to underworld girls, but could not hold either wife.

Emile decides to exercise some authority over his sister, ordering her to end her friendship with Bébert, an apache. *Bébert sweeps him aside, installs himself in Irma's room, and lives off her profession. Bébert consistently bullies and threatens Emile. Emile begs his sister to leave the dreaded Bébert; and in the course of the discussion, Bébert enters the room. Our selection begins at this point.*

FRANCIS CARCO

Perversity

Francis Carco (born in 1886) is perhaps the most brilliant writer on the world of crime and vice, although he virtually limits his attention to the *apaches* of Paris. In a word, he takes over in the twentieth century the province of his idol, François Villon. Cabaret singer, poet, actor, the perfect Bohemian himself, he starved and he stole, but he refused to accept "bourgeois society," even when it honored him with prizes and academic recognition. A student of primitive instincts, he refuses to condemn and equally scorns to sentimentalize his subjects. No one can better convey swift, clipped, elliptical speech and retain its poetic quality than this unique Frenchman. For him, all persons involved in love or crime or vice are partly accomplices of those they fear or oppose. In *Perversity* (1925) the triangle is unexpected: a prostitute, her cowardly brother (a wretched clerk), and her swashbuckling "lover" who profits by her trade—the *apache's* incitation of woman's love by inflicting pain on her brother has no counterpart in fiction, the Marquis de Sade notwithstanding. Carco does not simplify her reaction: his picture of her divided loyalties is founded on years of study of the underworld girl.

IT was, in fact, Bébert. He came in, seemed astonished to find Emile with his sister, but said nothing and took off his cap which he threw on the bed.

"Ah!" stammered La Rouque, "Emile and I were just talking about you."

"Well, don't disturb yourselves."

La Rouque told him with a little laugh which sounded false: "We weren't saying anything much."

Bébert turned towards Emile and looking at him: "Here's somebody who's not too pleased to see me," he declared. "Isn't it true?"

"Not at all," replied La Rouque. "Only you frighten him and he takes all your nonsense seriously. He's at that stage that he doesn't know what to invent to frighten himself. Imagine."

"I, I frighten him?"

"Oh you're funny all the same," said La Rouque, "you can't help it . . . the proof . . ."

"But I've never frightened him," replied Bébert shamelessly. "It's his fancy. Imagination. Have you noticed it, you?"

He made a little grimace, stared in front of him, as if he were suddenly overcome by an obscure thought, smiled, winked one eye.

"I assure you," he asserted in a playful tone of voice, "that there must be a mistake."

And addressing himself to Emile who remained cautiously at a distance. "Well," he said, "answer, as we're talking about you. Aren't you happier? Don't you trust me?"

Emile opened his mouth, but no sound could come out of it. Embarrassed he tried to answer by a gesture, a large uncertain gesture.

"There," remarked Irma, "you put him in a state just by looking at him. He can't talk. It's funny to be like that, isn't it? You mustn't be angry with him."

"Well naturally," said Bébert.

His expression changed, however, became strained and hard.

"Emile," called La Rouque.

"No, leave him alone," cut in Bébert, "look at him! A little more and he would walk inside the wall, he's so glad I'm talking to him. What did I tell you? He's going to upset the dressing table now."

"Come on," called Irma a second time. "He won't touch you. Come on. Come, Emile."

Bébert, who had slyly thrust his hands into his little waistcoat pocket, waited, rocking himself backwards and forwards.

"Come close—but come here," repeated La Rouque.

"She's right. Come on!" proposed Bébert. "Didn't you hear?"

"I . . . I . . ." stuttered Emile piteously, pointing at Bébert. "There . . . there . . ." He stepped back terrified.

"What?"

Bébert asked: "Are you going to keep us waiting for long? Making such a fuss. Come on then, obstinate. Ah no . . . you won't?"

He made two or three steps in Emile's direction and seemed good naturedly amused with the terror he was inspiring. He took his time, stood in an astonished attitude.

"The knife," muttered Emile, "in his pocket . . . the . . . the knife . . . Irma! He's opened it."

Irma shut her eyes.

"Open?" declared Bébert in a conciliatory way. "Well yes. It's open."

"Oh," begged Emile . . . "for pity's sake! Don't come near me . . . stop!"

"You're all the same an obstinate devil," said Bébert. "If I ask you to come to me, you won't, and when I come to you you shout."

Irma said in a low voice: "Bébert, I won't allow you to hurt him."

"So," he sneered . . . "you . . . you've got something to say about it. You're joking."

"Bébert!"

"Wait!" he answered . . . "there will be something left for you if you want it. Don't worry."

As he was speaking to Irma, he moved closer to Emile, who tried to thrust him aside. Bébert pushed roughly.

"There!" he declared all of a sudden showing his knife . . . "You'll see. What is a paltry little stroke of the blade? I don't want to kill, you idiot! I'm simply going to prick you . . . prick you . . . you won't feel it . . . I assure you that you'll feel nothing at all . . . hardly."

"Oh no . . . no, no," moaned Emile who had backed to the other end of the room and was standing against the wall motionless, in a terrified attitude.

Bébert stared rudely into his eyes trying to penetrate him with his look, then shaking his weapon with the most engaging expression in the world: "Are you ready?" he questioned. "It'll be done quickly. Don't move."

Emile cried out.

"There!" said Bébert.

He darted his knife forward, withdrew it, to threaten Irma, for she had instinctively moved forward to stop him. Then very quickly he touched Emile a second time.

"Help," cried Emile, "Murder! Help! Help!"

Bébert declared. "If you make that row I'll finish you . . . *hein?* Do you understand . . . I'll . . ."

He looked at the blade of his knife which was covered with blood and master of himself as of each of the blows he was giving, clenched his teeth.

"Monsieur Bébert, Monsieur Bébert," wept Emile. "No, Monsieur Bébert . . . Oh!"

He collapsed on the floor, screamed louder, quivered with pain. Bébert bent over his victim. He did not sink the blade deeply, but as soon as it touched Emile withdrew it rapidly to stab again. . . . The louder Emile shouted the more coolly Bébert continued his horrible game. He stood up at last, pale, contracted, his eyes gleaming strangely, shut his knife and in a voice which sounded toneless, ordered: "Now there . . . it's over . . . I'm not touching you. . . . But no. . . . No, stand up. . . . Go! The prickings I've given you are less than nothing. . . . Stand up . . . go . . . don't make me say it again. . . . Go off. . . . Go to your room."

Emile, staggering like a drunken man, obeyed, he passed in front of Irma and wanted to stop. Bébert pushed him from the back. He fell down in the passage, got up painfully, disappeared. But Bébert had followed him.

"Go away," moaned Emile.

"You'll undress," said Bébert, "and Irma will give you water, towels, and some thick salt that you'll melt in the water. You'll only have to pass the salt water where you're pricked. . . . You'll go to bed . . ."

"Irma," he called.

She appeared, livid.

"Bring what I've just said," said Bébert quietly, "and make haste. He won't die of it this time. Don't worry. But in case he starts shouting again when you go down, you'd better go by yourself and I'll stay here to look after him."

After this advice, Bébert went off to wash his hands. He also washed his knife, took off his shoes and put on Emile's slippers.

"He's bleeding a lot, you know," confided Irma joining him in the kitchen.

"Ah, yes?"

"Yes, yes, awfully . . ."

"Well, it's natural," concluded Bébert. "There's nothing in that not quite natural, I assure you. It's rather the contrary that would astonish me."

Terrified at the sight of his streaming blood, Emile began to weep aloud, but Bébert called him brutally to order.

"Do you want me to come and shut your mouth for you?"

Emile wept more quietly. He had four wounds, not very deep, in the shoulder and the fleshy part of his arm, two others on the right thigh and a long scratch on the groin which bled profusely. The towels he had dipped in the water were crimson. Emile wet them, wrung them out, and pressed them on his wounds, which burned him all the more, and the pain forced little screams out of him which he stifled so as not to irritate Bébert.

That individual sat in the kitchen looking at the newspapers. He was without remorse. He read quietly, a cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth; from time to time he smiled, satisfied with himself, stretched, poured himself out some rum. His watch and his knife were on the table near the bottle. He glanced at them occasionally. The watch reminded him of Irma, the knife of Emile. But he did not think for long about it, and went on reading very seriously.

Five or six times La Rouque came in accompanied, and Bébert heard her open and shut the door. She went downstairs. She came up again.

. . . The evening passed without incident. There was silence in Emile's room, he had ended by going to bed and sleeping. As for Bébert, he finished his newspapers, emptied three quarters of the bottle of rum.

He yawned: "Ahhhh . . ."

Irma accompanied a client to the door, and prepared to follow him outside.

"Bah! That's enough," said Bébert to her, "leave it alone for to-night."

He got up, left the kitchen.

"Well," whispered La Rouque . . . "Emile?"

"He hasn't bothered me," said Bébert, "he's had enough probably."

"Have you been to see him?"

"Well, no."

Irma suggested: "Shall I go and have a look myself? Perhaps he wants clean towels; one can't refuse that."

"I am not stopping you," said Bébert.

He watched Irma going into the room, shook his head silently, went to the door, turned the key in the lock twice, came back.

"Well," he enquired, "he's not dead?"

Irma laden with the basin and the blood-stained towels answered in an undertone: "He's made a mess on the floor, I tell you. It's flooded with water. What an annoying thing!"

"I should think so," said Bébert, going to bed.

La Rouque shook herself.

"Good-night," said Bébert.

"I'm coming," she answered, rinsing the basin at the sink and holding it carefully so as not to soil her clothes. "In five minutes."

She took clean linen out of a cupboard, went back to Emile's bedside and listened to his breathing.

"But he has no sheets," she declared suddenly with astonishment. "What has he done with them? It's annoying all the same! He'll stain everything."

Blood had stuck in clots to his shirt in places; the bed clothes, the mattress; his clothes which he had thrown in a heap on the floor when he undressed, were soaked with it.

"My God," sighed La Rouque, discouraged, "what does a thing like this mean?"

She felt disgusted and saddened, and told herself that to behave in such an odious way, Bébert must indeed find pleasure in cruelties. Was it possible? She asked herself in vain. The thing went beyond her imagination, seemed to her revolting and monstrous. Why? she repeated, walking up and down the room. Why? . . . Why? . . .

Bébert who had gone to bed, called her.

"All right," she said, "I'm coming."

"But at once," cried Bébert.

La Rouque joined him.

"Naturally," he observed, "I don't count for anything now, everything is for the other one."

"He hasn't even got any sheets," said Irma.

"Well, so much the worse."

Bébert sat up in bed.

"You must be crazy," he said, "to worry about sheets."

"That depends," she said, "a poor fellow like that. I can well be worried. After all, he is my brother, isn't he? And you've arranged him properly!"

"He's been asking for it a long time," affirmed Bébert tranquil. "And it had to come."

"Ah—really?"

"Really."

He added, lighting a cigarette: "When people go against me, I revenge myself. I don't forget. I never forget. But as your dirty brother is going to be as quiet as a lamb now, I'll put the sheets back in his room tomorrow morning and we won't say anything more about it."

Then Irma rebelled: "What," she exclaimed, "you! you lowered yourself to do such a thing?"

"Well, why not?"

"Because," said Irma angry, "you're not much of a man to behave so meanly."

Bébert was silent.

"No, not much of a man," the girl continued. "I don't recognize you, it has no name what you did. And what would people say if they knew? Did you think of that?

"Certainly," she went on, "everybody would blame you."

"And you the first, isn't that so?" said Bébert, who had jumped out of bed and stood waiting, his hand raised.

"Yes," said Irma.

The hand came down. Irma did not flinch and received it full in the face.

"Go on," she provoked him, "hit me again, go on. If you think it will make me change my mind, you are wrong. Well, what's the matter? Don't you feel brave enough to do it?"

She looked Bébert full in the face very close, and the better to defy him, began to laugh.

"Look out," said Bébert.

Irma answered him. "To hurt defenseless people and to hit women, you're strong enough for that, aren't you? It's a habit of yours!"

"Look out," he repeated, "I won't say it again. If you want a thrashing, I'll give it to you, don't be afraid."

"That's it," she said.

But Bébert suddenly turned his back on her and declared, very dignified: "Well, talk away, you get on my nerves! I'm not here to work so hard. Ah good God, no! After the brother, to have to put the sister in her place, thank you very much!"

The Red One lay awake the whole night beside him. She was indignant. She could not understand Bébert, and the questions she asked herself about him harassed her. What sort of a man was this to have so easily made up his mind not to beat her?

She was astonished, lost herself in conjectures, asked herself over and over again the same question. But the more she tried to answer it, the more useless was her effort.

She saw the dawn pierce through the shutters, grow, fill the room with a vague discolored glimmer. She stared at this glimmer on the walls and the ceiling, and it tired her eyes. Then the light became clearer, shone between the thin wooden slats, and Irma listened to hear if Emile was getting up. It was time. The carts which were clattering in the streets ought to have awakened him. La Rouque was worried. She did not dare to go and see what Emile was doing for fear of being surprised by Bébert. She wondered if he was in pain, if he needed her. She was crushed by an immense discouragement.

At her side, Bébert was snoring open mouthed. His breath smelt strongly of rum and tobacco. Asleep he was unpleasant to look upon. He had had his hair cut the day before, and shaved on the temples, and this gave him an unfamiliar expression. A strange face which the girl discovered for the first time. Why had he cut his hair in that stupid fashion, like an American sailor? It was certainly not becoming, and did not beautify him.

But alas! Bébert was the same in everything. It had pleased him and there it was. He did not need any other reason. His only explanation would be that he had wanted to do it. Besides, he did not give explanations.

Irma was reminded of the revolting way in which he had pulled his knife out and attacked Emile. Emile had said or done nothing to justify such an act. On the contrary. But Bébert had wanted to stab Emile several times with his knife and he had done it. It was his idea; he had been planning it for a long time, ever since the evening when he had come home and threatened the poor wretch. No one could have stopped him.

Neither God nor devil. It was no use fighting against his nature, a horrible nature which pushed him to evil. Afterwards he thought no more about what he had done, he had no regrets, no worries even.

"No! none," said La Rouque to herself. "As for regretting the harm he does, he does not care a bit."

She sighed, leant out of bed and looked at a watch she had on a chair near by to see the time. Then she slipped under the bedclothes, and shiveringly pulled them high up round her throat. . . .

NOTE ON TESS SLESINGER'S

"THE UNPOSSESSED"

Elizabeth Leonard has had a succession of lovers—Ferris, Brownlow, and most loved of all the promiscuous crew, Denny. Her cousin Bruno, who is a kind of carrier of all the intellectual corruptions of his friends, has helped reduce Elizabeth's affair with Denny to ashes. The scene presented in our selection is Elizabeth's drunken apostrophe to herself on her return trip from France to America.

TESS SLESINGER

The Unpossessed

Born into a New York middle-class family, Tess Slesinger (1905-1945) was brought up in the traditional culture of her group. She attended the New York Ethical Culture school and found her family so kind and cooperative that original sin had to descend upon her in the shape of lies, just in order to smash her unwanted Eden. She projected her talent into short stories and by twenty-three was already known. She achieved a reputation with a collection *Time, the Present* and a novel, *The Unpossessed* (1934), which was looked upon as the harbinger of great things. However, she heard the call of Hollywood and, like so many others who have followed its glittering promise, she ceased growing as a creative writer. The selection here reprinted from her novel is a good example of the "hard-boiled" school by one of its female adepts. But where the males either exult or merely chronicle, this brilliant, vigorous woman overflows with despair. She is acid, she complains, she sees the doom awaiting womankind in that world for which they are not, however long or clever their pose, basically suited.

OH have another drink, Elizabeth! Thanks Elizabeth, I will. "The same, please," she said to the riddled steward who like a eunuch moved indifferently to serve desires he no longer felt; and did not add "And hurry! hurry! for God's sake hurry, between drinks one falls to thinking—and thinking, from the old Chinese, my boy, is a viper in the chest." And a cigarette, my dear, can I tempt you? And another lover, can I find one quick enough? Chain drinker, chain smoker, chain lover, chain rover—let the chain sag somewhere and you will have a pain in the lung from cigarettes, a pain in the brain from pernods, and God knows your soul will ache from undigested unloved lovers. But the steward has forgotten pain with joy, if he ever knew it he's lost the need for quick oblivion; the God damned steward doesn't hurry. My good steward you are a stranger to me but I must tell you all: only this morning he gave me the sack, the gate, le congé, he gave me the bum's rush steward, he gave me back my own toothbrush, he gave me all he had to give and all he had was a bright red copy of Ulysses and my own American toothbrush. Life is the longest distance between two points my good man (even on board my fast express, my rollicking jittery fast express, my twentieth century sex-express), the bar is filled with strangers, all non-lovers, and Denny, my parenthetical Denny, is gone, gone, gone. Close parentheses bravely on the poor little unsatisfactory detour-amour. . . . *Steward a drink for the lady!*

You find yourself in the middle of the ocean, mademoiselle? Between two continents so to speak? A case of sink or swim at twenty-six? What is the object of your game, sister? Why have you left one island, why are you crossing madly (all aboard the fast express) to the other? Why will you eagerly seek on the second what you eagerly bid goodbye to on the first? All over the cockeyed world you have carried your tough little American body and your lamb-profile (so like Bruno's)—and what has it got you, Elizabeth, if you will pardon a personal question? what have you today at twenty-six as over and above the ambiguous hopes you entertained six years ago when you left the first gay gent (name of Ferris, good old Ferris, good old art-colony Ferris) and trekked with your toothbrush to the second? Why, I am an emancipated lady, Elizabeth, I play the game like a man, Elizabeth—you donkey, you sentimentalist, you cry-baby, you sissy—what in hell do you want, every damn thing that's going? The answer is Yes, Yes, Yes! But choice involves sacrifice, is largely a matter of elimination, Bruno pedantically said—oh quite some time ago, some years ago in fact, certainly before one started this endless chain, this fast non-stop express, of drinks and unloved lovers. Elizabeth your mind is a slop-pail, all odds and ends and floating twisted orange peels (goodbye, my dear Denny, we're all washed up), orange peels and broken corks and busted truisms—from the damned Chinese—and you tell me my eyes have grown hard, my poor Denny—(*steward will you hurry hurry hurry*). And the only thing you've saved out of the fire my dear is your nasty destructive beloved wit, he said it was sharp as a razor-blade (who said it, which one said that to Elizabeth, was it Brownlow, good old Brownlow—what! mixing your drinks and mixing your lovers, Elizabeth!), he said I was Delilah going around stabbing men with my sharp razor-wit. Ah, here comes my double Scotch!

Set it up, my boy, my riddled ancient eunuch steward, your desires are dead but the melody—oh let's not quote, Elizabeth! Let's not quote and let's not think, let's never do anything but drink. Here's to you Denny my darling, you can't hold your liquor and you can't hold your gals. Maybe if we had an understanding, he said politely, you know, hell with the romantic twaddle-twaddle, do you want me to get on my knees you fool, let's have an understanding. Ah yes, the understanding that passeth love, arrangement instead of relationship—thanks darling, I'd rather have the toothbrush. So long Denny, so long France, so long Florence, Italy—hold everything, America, your wandering daughter's coming home. Home is where you hang your hat and drop your skirt, my dear by the time I'm thirty I'll be at home anywhere in this cock-eyed world, I speak the universal language, the twentieth century snappy dead language, of no-love loving, of lust without love, I belong anywhere and nowhere (self-pity is the lowest form of wit), a gal without a country, a ship without a port—never mind America, I'm coming back to stay! Love without lust and lust without love, kisses don't touch you, without them you're lost. . . . Ah stranger, I see you, at yon corner table, give me the glad eye, the sad eye, the mad eye—professional glad girl, hysterical sad girl, the old army game is beginning again. Hold off a bit stranger, where's your technique?

In the strange half-gloom of rainy attic afternoon, now that you're in de-part-ment-al, Bruno said—and of course it was raining that day so they couldn't go out to the carriage-step, so they sat there (are you sure your mother's out? why yes, she went shopping with yours) sat there and talked in the strange half-gloom. Now that you're in de-part-ment-al, Bruno said—and didn't he just tell her what men could do to girls. But can't the women do it back (*steward one more of the same*), she said: if I were a woman I would. But Bruno said no, oh Bruno said no, he said it was up to the man. But the girl can say no if she wants to, Bruno? That floored him a bit, he squirmed and scratched. Then he shot out, She better not—no one might love her and ask her again. So probably love is all that counts (she asked it then and she asked it again). She said would he do it to her; he said no. Of course not, he said. You're crazy, he said, growing angry. She said there was nobody else she loved, no other man except her father, nobody else she knew so well. Bruno said she was practically his kid sister and everybody knew that cousins didn't "love" that way. She grew mad and indignant, she reminded him bitterly how he sneaked into the nursery at night and tried to scare her, telling her she was an adopted child and not her own mother's baby at all, not his cousin, not her own nice uncle's niece; if she was adopted surely it was all right? And Bruno said if she told anybody what he told her in the strange half-gloom of rainy attic afternoon he'd pull her damn braids out and he said further that he'd tell how she had shown him where women were different and then he ran downstairs and she ran after him and he jumped on his new two-wheeler and pedalled fiercely down the street and she ran a little way after him and then stopped and stood crying before the house.

Probably love is all that counts (in the long slow days of the carriage-step, in the gently rolling endless days before one boarded the fast express) probably love is all that counts? It took him seven years to answer that one, by that time my hair was up in braids, yes Bruno I know it's high time I know I ought to go off the deep end but all the boys I see are stupid, I don't like any of them, it's true I'm going to be an artist and I have to be free to be an artist, but what can I do if the boys are all stupid? The sooner you get rid of sentimental notions, kid, he said; you're not in de-part-ment-al any more, he said; don't be obsessed by inhibitions, don't be possessed by superstitions; you've got to be free, my dear, free, as free as a man, you must play the man's game and beat him at it; read the books Betsey, you'll see, it's a matter of health mental and physical, a small fact of science, of scientific friction; romantic frustration—the hell with all that; be light, be free, be casual; why don't you try an art colony, kid? no use postponing, no use frustrating, freedom's the password the byword the slyword, don't get possessed, cruise around kid, see what it's about; listen to me Elizabeth, I'll make a man of you yet! Love without lust and lust without love, poor haywire play-girl, drink-sodden gay girl (stick around stranger, have patience, stranger)—hell with it, steward —*one more of the same!*

Steward a drink for the lady—the lady is lost, the lady has boarded the fast express, all aboard ladies and gay modern gents, try an art colony first, all aboard, no stops no halts no brooding there, all aboard the twentieth century unlimited, hell-bent for nowhere, the only non-stop through express, try and get off it kid once you're on board, no peace for the young, no rest for the restless, the rollicking jittery cocktail express, nothing can matter so wear down, you nerves, no brakes, no goal, no love, on we go glittering jittering twittering, try and get off it kid once you're on board, it'll rattle you shatter you, if you jump out you're lost, stick with it girl, where's all your masculine guts? The smart young adages race down the tracks, the train runs on theory, the passengers' nerves, the train roars on no stop no change, no love just lust, goodbye home and hello France, goodbye France, I'm coming, home—love without lust and lust without love, the country's on the breadlines, the deadlines, the redlines, have a heart America, I'm coming home to stay.

Listen steward, so I went to the art colony, don't you see, he put me on the train, he put me on the fast express and filled my pockets with quotations from the old Chinese. Throw out the notions that possess you, outmoded superstitions of a bygone day. We're not the children of our parents, we're the parents of the new. Shake yourself free, Elizabeth, step out boldly like a man. So I went with too much rouge on my lips and I met Ferris and we had a drink and he said why don't you move over into my studio, my girl left Saturday. But isn't it, I said timidly, but isn't it, I started shyly—isn't it—please tell me—a little bit cheap? Cheap, that's a good one! cheap! that's a hot one! he roared till the blood burned his face. *Cheap*—what you see around here isn't *cheap*—why it's better than that, he said, laughing and laughing—it's *free! Steward you can see for yourself the lady needs another drink.*

(Why stranger, you are growing bold! Is that a smile mixed up with your moustache? Moustache like Ferris, eyes like Brownlow, nothing like Denny—will I never know a whole new man again? just carbon copies, slightly blurred? Hold off a bit, stranger, let me get my bearings, stranger, I'm tired as hell, mister, and I can't find my lipstick . . .)

Oh artists, artists, I said I was tired of artists going about with their tongues hanging out of their mouths bored wanting a woman not wanting a woman, what kind of men are they talking so freely to girls about how hard it is to make a girl how easy it is to make a girl, how long do they think a girl can listen to that with her mouth open politely smiling, politely sympathizing, politely laying bets on sorority-sisters and all the time the sex in herself drying up and sitting like a ball of rotten cheese in her lap. Something's the matter with sex these days, these twentieth century rollicking days, either there's too much or too little anyway it's too easy (free, not cheap, that's a hot one!) sitting up finding yourself in bed with a man you don't like and yet there you are both tired both a little sick with too much intimacy sitting up in bed and talking about how good a ham sandwich would go with a bottle of beer and if only we were in good old Paris. Well I've been in Paris, Ferris my friend, and it's the same thing there, *"I'll show you Florence, Italy."* Oh artists, artists, I said I was tired of artists—and anyway you've got to play the man's game, Betsey-Elizabeth, the man runs fast, the girl must run faster, look sharp Elizabeth here comes your train, pack up your toothbrush, your hard-bristle toothbrush, wave him goodbye, all aboard, all aboard, all aboard ladies and gay modern gents, all aboard the gay twentieth century, hell-bent for nowhere, the sex-express. *Steward something tells me I will have another drink.*

Listen steward, I'll tell you the story of my latest, the latest notch in my belt, this arty, helpless newspaper reporter, my Denny (I wish he were here.) I'll make a story of it for you, steward my dear, a twentieth century three-month detour, rollicking parenthesis on the sex-express. Her wit almost abandoned her, mister steward, as they sat forgetting the others at the little round table in the café while the plates piled up at their elbows. On the third pernod she discovered that cleft in his chin which promised weakness. Out with the scissors, Delilah, out with your good sharp razor-blade wit. Leaning toward him, leaning toward the stranger Denny, she took a shot in the dark at that cleft in his wavering chin: So at thirty-three you're still reporting for the newspapers, Mister Kirby, incoming boats, outgoing boats, what did she wear, whom will he marry—well, well, well, wouldn't your old high school English teacher be just too proud? Would you mind, Mister Kirby, lowering your head a bit, I am doing a drawing of you, one of my nasty satiric caricatures; your head must be lowered as though you were about to buck the world, but you and I of course will know better—have another pernod, Mister?—we will know all along, and keep it between us, that you hold your head down because you would be ashamed to look your old English teacher in the eye. He narrowed his eyes and hated her; but then he lowered his head (exactly as that nasty girl was drawing him) as though he were ashamed to look *her* in the eye; and smiling with charm and sheepishness, the cleft in his chin going in as though weakly receiving her thrust, he met her eyes with a look of recognition; they smiled and they knew they would be lovers, unloving lovers on the fast express. (*Steward do you see that impertinent gentleman at yon corner table? that look in his eyes, it's familiar, he knows, . . . try and get off it kid, once you're on board . . .*)

The first month steward, we laid serious plans for his breaking away and doing a novel; he leaned on me utterly; bowed his head; reached out to what seemed my superior strength. But the girl couldn't take it, it looked like love. Good old Denny, grovelling in the dust, Elizabeth will join you and grovel too. Have a pernod, Denny, what's it all about? what's the object of the game? suppose you did write a novel, it would be a rotten novel, what have you got to say, what matters enough to write about? And look at my drawing, my poor defeated unloved lover, look at my lousy, phony, stinking-cynical drawing. Caricatures! Destructive, defeatist, escapist—but let's not go highbrow, let's take up drinking again, la Frump will serve us pernods with our chocolate. He ought to have yelled at me, steward, throttled me, burned our damn bridges behind us, he ought to have shouted that we strike out together and aim at decency in art and life. But why? what for?

and what is decency? these things are pleasanter discussed in our cups. He liked finding his girl as weak as himself. His lovable weak smile was for both of us now. In the second month we went back to drinking pernods; in the third month we barely held our jobs for sleeping the pernods off. Delilah conquering? Delilah triumphing? Why not at all my dear steward, I should have thought you keener—I feel like hell, while with my sharp phony-razor-blade wit I cut out his strength I cut out my own as well. What will become of us, Denny my dear, my lost abandoned unloved lover, weeping together over Ulysses we wept because we could not weep, we wept because we could not love, we wept because we loved before, we care about nothing, believe in nothing, live for nothing, because we are free, free, free—like empty sailboats lost at sea . . . *and Bruno withheld his consent to our marriage.*

Bruno, Bruno, help me out, catch me careening in my mad pace, let me rest for once and catch my breath. "We are scared till the blood in our veins runs thin and we must hop from one person to the next because to stay is too unbearably exactly what we want." Bruno, we're unhappy. Bruno, we're mad. Bruno, explain it to me, tell me the object of the game. You've told me what to turn my back on; what, my darling, can I face? Tell me why I went away, tell me why I'm coming back. Tell me if there's an end to my endless journey, why did you put me on this fast express. Where am I going and why, is there no end but more pernods and men? Probably love is all that counts? and love is not to be found these days, or not to be looked in the face when it's there? What do we hide from, Bruno, what do we seek? I'm so gay, I'm so light, I bounce here and there like a bright rubber ball; and yet the look in my eyes is hard, is hard, my wit is like a razor-blade, I use it to wound before I can be wounded, my wit protects me like a glittering twittering barbed wire fence and no one can come through and touch me. Each year I shrink smaller, I huddle together, and the barbs on my fence grow sharper and brighter, I am gayer and harder, my voice grows brittle, my laugh grows harsh. Love, don't touch me; love, keep your hands off this proud modern daughter; happiness girl, no brooding there, it's a matter of friction, of scientific friction; if you go sentimental you have only yourself to blame, don't be obsessed by inhibitions, don't be possessed by old traditions. (*Ah stranger, I see you, at yon corner table, you know me, you know me, as if I were naked.*) Haywire play-girl, drink-sodden gay-girl, self-pity is the lowest form of wit, wit is the purest form of self-pity. I was tired of artists, artists, I'm tired of unloved lovers, *Bruno what is the object of my game?* Hell-bent for what is my fast express, my jingling jangling cocktail express, lust without love and joy without joy, we pound down the tracks on our sex-express, no stopping, no loving, no time to take breath. Goodbye Ferris, give me my toothbrush, hello Arthur Brownlow I'm not stopping long—my toothbrush, my toothbrush, my fast train is leaving, I must run, I must catch it, no I won't forget you, I'll chalk you up, I'll put a notch in my belt to remember you by. . . . Bruno, Bruno, another gent has bit the dust. What am I, your father-confessor, Elizabeth? No darling, you're something else again—I don't know what, procurer, vicarious cousin; my dear, you're my only stop, you're where I climb down and take breath, my link with the past, the peaceful past . . . before I change trains and jingle jangle along again on my fast express, the non-stop, non-loving twentieth century unlimited, the haywire cocktail express, the gay and happy sex-express, hell-bent for nowhere. . . .

Steward, the stranger approaches my table. The eye of a man, the eye of a man, looking down into hers, it's the old army game, the train's roaring again. "Can I sit here," he said. But why did he ask. He was sitting already, his knee touching hers. Two drinks on the table, two knees underneath. A Jew too—medical student perhaps? haberdasher? son of a cobbler drifting toward socialism? All Jews look like anything, all Jews look like Bruno, all Jews are not Denny. Welcome, stranger! sholom aleichem, my poor fellow-passenger! I give you the glad eye, the sad eye, the mad eye. You steadily give it back. Know the rules, do you, my boy? Know how the game goes on, steadily, stealthily, know how to play it with languor and skill? "You're sure you don't mind," he said brittley, bitterly. "I have whiskey in my cabin," he said, sly easy gent; "want to come down awhile"—carelessly, casual. "You talk quite a lot, I see," he said, lonesome and human.

"I beg your pardon," she said (oh Bruno, please help me). "If there's anything I hate it's whiskey," she said. (Goodbye France, wait for me, America, your wandering daughter's coming home, coming every step of the way on the fast express, jingling jangling on the whiskey express, eggs without salt and lust without love, joy without joy and motion without splendor, the express careens, it rolls faster and faster, it's rolling down-hill, it's hell-bent for what.) "If there's anything I hate it's cabins," she said. (Try and get off it kid once you're on board—with *your* help, Bruno, with your help, Bruno, you put me on, now lift me down, now stop this train, oh Bruno I need you.) "If there's anything I hate," she said, "it's strange gentlemen in strange bars, I beg your pardon, but I wish you'd go back to where you came from, no, we've never met before I'm sure." (Oh Bruno, I love you, it's love without lust, oh Bruno you sent for me, forbid me to marry, I'm coming home Bruno, the short-cut home, no detours Bruno, no harsh parentheses, I'm coming straight and you must catch me, save me, flag my train. . . .) "Good night, of course I forgive you, a perfectly legitimate mistake I'm sure."

(*Steward, the lady wants her check.*) The lady feels good, the lady feels sure, the lady looks forward, she's headed for home! . . .

NOTE ON JAMES M. CAIN'S

"THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE"

Frank, a wandering casual worker, takes a job in a California roadside beanery owned by Nick Papadakis, a Greek. Nick is a generous, good-natured, naive soul; Frank is a calculating "article." Nick's wife, Cora, an American girl, had resigned herself to marrying Nick in order to save herself from despairing poverty. But once she has again associated with a fellow-American, she grows resentful of her marriage and finds her husband repellent. Frank persuades Nick to go to Los Angeles to buy a neon sign for the beanery. In his absence, Cora and Frank make love. Our selection begins when Nick returns with his beloved neon sign.

JAMES M. CAIN

The Postman Always Rings Twice

Widely known as one of the chief protagonists of the "hard-boiled school," James M. Cain has surprising antecedents. He was born in 1892 in tranquil Annapolis and educated at Washington College of which his father was president. He became a reporter in Baltimore where he met H. L. Mencken, and after editing the "Lorraine Cross" while serving in World War I, he returned to work on the conservative Baltimore *Sun*. Later he accepted a professorship of Journalism at St. John's College in his native Annapolis, one of the serenest and most charming old seats of learning. Cain subsequently specialized in political writing, but after his remarkable début with *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) he devoted himself to fiction. *Serenade* (1937) and *Mildred Pierce* (1941) show a broadening in scope. Cain has gone beyond Hemingway in pace of melodrama, in basic rather than induced toughness, and in the portrayal of women whose wants are immediate, physical, and material, and who have neither words, time, nor emotions to waste. Cain is not lavish with words—indeed Herbert Spencer's criterion of style as economy would make him the greatest writer of all time!

FOR two days after that I was dead, but the Greek was sore at me, so I got by all right. He was sore at me because I hadn't fixed the swing door that led from the lunchroom into the kitchen. She told him it swung back and hit her in the mouth. She had to tell him something. Her mouth was all swelled up where I had bit it. So he said it was my fault, that I hadn't fixed it. I stretched the spring, so it was weaker, and that fixed it.

But the real reason he was sore at me was over the sign. He had fallen for it so hard he was afraid I would say it was my idea, stead of his. It was such a hell of a sign they couldn't get it done for him that afternoon. It took them three days, and when it was ready I went in and got it and hung it up. It had on it all that he had drew on the paper, and a couple of other things besides. It had a Greek flag and an American flag, and hands shaking hands, and Satisfaction Guaranteed. It was all in red, white, and blue Neon letters, and I waited until dark to turn on the juice. When I snapped the switch, it lit up like a Christmas tree.

"Well, I've seen many a sign in my time, but never one like that. I got to hand it to you, Nick."

"By golly. By golly."

We shook hands. We were friends again.

Next day I was alone with her for a minute, and swung my fist up against her leg so hard it nearly knocked her over.

"How do you get that way?" She was snarling like a cougar. I liked her like that.

"How are you, Cora?"

"Lousy."

From then on, I began to smell her again.

One day the Greek heard there was a guy up the road undercutting him on gas. He jumped in the car to go see about it. I was in my room when he drove off, and I turned around to dive down in the kitchen. But she was already there, standing in the door.

I went over and looked at her mouth. It was the first chance I had had to see how it was. The swelling was all gone, but you could still see the tooth marks, little blue creases on both lips. I touched them with my fingers. They were soft and damp. I kissed them, but not hard. They were little soft kisses. I had never thought about them before. She stayed until the Greek came back, about an hour. We didn't do anything. We just lay on the bed. She kept rumpling my hair, and looking up at the ceiling, like she was thinking.

"You like blueberry pie?"

"I don't know. Yeah. I guess so."

"I'll make you some."

"Look out, Frank. You'll break a spring leaf."

"To hell with the spring leaf."

We were crashing into a little eucalyptus grove beside the road. The Greek had sent us down to the market to take back some T-bone steaks he said were lousy, and on the way back it had got dark. I slammed the car in there, and it bucked and bounced, but when I was in among the trees I stopped. Her arms were around me before I even cut the lights. We did plenty. After a while we just sat there. "I can't go on like this, Frank."

"Me neither."

"I can't stand it. And I've got to get drunk with you, Frank. You know what I mean? Drunk."

"I know."

"And I hate that Greek."

"Why did you marry him? You never did tell me that."

"I haven't told you anything."

"We haven't wasted any time on talk."

"I was working in a hash house. You spend two years in a Los Angeles hash house and you'll take the first guy that's got a gold watch."

"When did you leave Iowa?"

"Three years ago. I won a beauty contest. I won a high school beauty contest, in Des Moines. That's where I lived. The prize was a trip to Hollywood. I got off the Chief with fifteen guys taking my picture, and two weeks later I was in the hash house."

"Didn't you go back?"

"I wouldn't give them the satisfaction."

"Did you get in movies?"

"They gave me a test. It was all right in the face. But they talk, now. The pictures, I mean. And when I began to talk, up there on the screen, they knew me for what I was, and so did I. A cheap Des Moines trollop, that had as much chance in pictures as a monkey has. Not as much. A monkey, anyway, can make you laugh. All I did was make you sick."

"And then?"

"Then two years of guys pinching your leg and leaving nickel tips and asking how about a little party tonight. I went on some of them parties, Frank."

"And then?"

"You know what I mean about them parties?"

"I know."

"Then he came along. I took him, and so help me, I meant to stick by him. But I can't stand it any more. God, do I look like a little white bird?"

"To me, you look more like a hell cat."

"You know, don't you. That's one thing about you. I don't have to fool you all the time. And you're clean. You're not greasy. Frank, do you have any idea what that means? You're not greasy."

"I can kind of imagine."

"I don't think so. No man can know what that means to a woman. To have to be around somebody that's greasy and makes you sick at the stomach when he touches you. I'm not really such a hell cat, Frank. I just can't stand it any more."

"What you trying to do? Kid me?"

"Oh, all right. I'm a hell cat, then. But I don't think I would be so bad. With somebody that wasn't greasy."

"Cora, how about you and me going away?"

"I've thought about it. I've thought about it a lot."

"We'll ditch this Greek and blow. Just blow."

"Where to?"

"Anywhere. What do we care?"

"Anywhere. Anywhere. You know where that is?"

"All over. Anywhere we choose."

"No it's not. It's the hash house."

"I'm not talking about the hash house. I'm talking about the road. It's fun, Cora. And nobody knows it better than I do. I know every twist and turn it's got. And I know how to work it, too. Isn't that what we want? Just to be a pair of tramps, like we really are?"

"You were a fine tramp. You didn't even have socks."

"You liked me."

"I loved you. I would love you without even a shirt. I would love you specially without a shirt, so I could feel how nice and hard your shoulders are."

"Socking railroad detectives developed the muscles."

"And you're hard all over. Big and tall and hard. And your hair is light. You're not a little soft greasy guy with black kinky hair that he puts bay rum on every night."

"That must be a nice smell."

"But it won't do, Frank. That road, it don't lead anywhere but to the hash house. The hash house for me, and some job like it for you. A lousy parking lot job, where you wear a smock. I'd cry if I saw you in a smock, Frank."

"Well?"

She sat there a long time, twisting my hand in both of hers. "Frank, do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Do you love so much that not anything matters?"

"Yes."

"There's one way."

"Did you say you weren't really a hell cat?"

"I said it, and I mean it. I'm not what you think I am, Frank. I want to work and be something, that's all. But you can't do it without love. Do you know that, Frank? Anyway, a woman can't. Well, I've made one mistake. And I've got to be a hell cat, just once, to fix it. But I'm not really a hell cat, Frank."

"They hang you for that."

"Not if you do it right. You're smart, Frank. I never fooled you for a minute. You'll think of a way. Plenty of them have. Don't worry. I'm not the first woman that had to turn hell cat to get out of a mess."

"He never did anything to me. He's all right."

"The hell he's all right. He stinks, I tell you. He's greasy and he stinks. And do you think I'm going to let you wear a smock, with Service Auto Parks printed on the back, Thank-U Call Again, while he has four suits and a dozen silk shirts? Isn't that business half mine? Don't I cook? Don't I cook good? Don't you do your part?"

"You talk like it was all right."

"Who's going to know if it's all right or not, but you and me?"

"You and me."

"That's it, Frank. That's all that matters, isn't it? Not you and me and the road, or anything else but you and me."

"You must be a hell cat, though. You couldn't make me feel like this if you weren't."

"That's what we're going to do. Kiss me, Frank. On the mouth."

I kissed her. Her eyes were shining up at me like two blue stars. It was like being in church.

"Got any hot water?"

"What's the matter with the bathroom?"

"Nick's in there."

"Oh. I'll give you some out of the kettle. He likes the whole heater full for his bath."

We played it just like we would tell it. It was about ten o'clock at night, and we had closed up, and the Greek was in the bathroom, putting on his Saturday night wash. I was to take the water up to my room, get ready to shave, and then remember I had left the car out. I was to go outside, and stand by to give her one on the horn if somebody came. She was to wait till she heard him in the tub, go in for a towel, and clip him from behind with a blackjack I had made for her out of a sugar bag with ball bearings wadded down in the end. At first, I was to do it, but we figured he wouldn't pay any attention to her if she went in there, where if I said I was after my razor, he might get out of the tub or something and help me look. Then she was to hold him under until he drowned. Then she was to leave the water running a little bit, and step out the window to the porch roof, and come down the stepladder I had put there, to the ground. She was to hand me the blackjack, and go back to the kitchen. I was to put the ball bearings back in the box, throw the bag away, put the car in, and go up to my room and start to shave. She would wait till the water began dripping down in the kitchen, and call me. We would break the door down, find him, and call the doctor. In the end, we figured it would look like he had slipped in the tub, knocked himself out, and then drowned. I got the idea from a piece in the paper where a guy had said that most accidents happen right in people's own bathtubs.

"Be careful of it. It's hot."

"Thanks.'

It was in a saucepan, and I took it up in my room and set it on the bureau, and laid my shaving stuff out. I went down and out to the car, and took a seat in it so I could see the road and the bathroom window, both. The Greek was singing. It came to me I better take note what the song was. It was Mother Machree. He sang it once, and then sang it over again. I looked in the kitchen. She was still there.

A truck and a trailer swung around the bend. I fingered the horn. Sometimes those truckmen stopped for something to eat, and they were the kind that would beat on the door till you opened up. But they went on. A couple more cars went by. They didn't stop. I looked in the kitchen again, and she wasn't there. A light went on in the bedroom.

Then, all of a sudden, I saw something move, back by the porch. I almost hit the horn, but then I saw it was a cat. It was just a gray cat, but it shook me up. A cat was the last thing I wanted to see then. I couldn't see it for a minute, and then there it was again, smelling around the stepladder. I didn't want to blow the horn, because it wasn't anything but a cat, but I didn't want it around that stepladder. I got out of the car, went back there, and shooed it away.

I got halfway back to the car, when it came back, and started up the ladder. I shooed it away again, and ran it clear back to the shacks. I started back to the car, and then stood there for a little bit, looking to see if it was coming back. A state cop came around the bend. He saw me standing there, cut his motor, and came wheeling in, before I could move. When he stopped he was between me and the car. I couldn't blow the horn.

"Taking it easy?"

"Just came out to put the car away."

"That your car?"

"Belongs to this guy I work for."

"O. K. Just checking up."

He looked around, and then he saw something. "I'll be damned. Look at that."

"Look at what?"

"Goddam cat, going up that stepladder."

"Ha."

"I love a cat. They're always up to something."

He pulled on his gloves, took a look at the night, kicked his pedal a couple of times, and went. Soon as he was out of sight I dove for the horn. I was too late. There was a flash of fire from the porch, and every light in the place went out. Inside, Cora was screaming with an awful sound in her voice. "Frank! Frank! Something has happened!"

I ran in the kitchen, but it was black dark in there and I didn't have any matches in my pocket, and I had to feel my way. We met on the stairs, she going down, me going up. She screamed again.

"Keep quiet, for God's sake keep quiet! Did you do it?"

"Yes, but the lights went out, and I haven't held him under yet!"

"We got to bring him to! There was a state cop out there, and he saw that stepladder!"

"Phone for the doctor!"

"You phone, and I'll get him out of there!"

She went down, and I kept on up. I went in the bathroom, and over to the tub. He was laying there in the water, but his head wasn't under. I tried to lift him. I had a hell of a time. He was slippery with soap, and I had to stand in the water before I could raise him at all. All the time I could hear her down there, talking to the operator. They didn't give her a doctor. They gave her the police.

I got him up, and laid him over the edge of the tub, and then got out myself, and dragged him in the bedroom and laid him on the bed. She came up, then, and we found matches, and got a candle lit. Then we went to work on him. I packed his head in wet towels, while she rubbed his wrists and feet.

"They're sending an ambulance."

"All right. Did he see you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Were you behind him?"

"I think so. But then the lights went out, and I don't know what happened. What did you do to the lights?"

"Nothing. The fuse popped."

"Frank. He'd better not come to."

"He's got to come to. If he dies, we're sunk. I tell you, that cop saw the stepladder. If he dies, then they'll know. If he dies, they've got us."

"But suppose he saw me? What's he going to say when he comes to?"

"Maybe he didn't. We just got to sell him a story, that's all. You were in here, and the lights popped, and you heard him slip and fall, and he didn't answer when you spoke to him. Then you called me, that's all. No matter what he says, you got to stick to it. If he saw anything, it was just his imagination, that's all."

"Why don't they hurry with that ambulance?"

"It'll be here."

Soon as the ambulance came, they put him on a stretcher and shoved him in. She rode with him. I followed along in the car. Halfway to Glendale, a state cop picked us up and rode on ahead. They went seventy miles an hour, and I couldn't keep up. They were lifting him out when I got to the hospital, and the state cop was bossing the job. When he saw me he gave a start and stared at me. It was the same cop.

They took him in, put him on a table, and wheeled him in an operating room. Cora and myself sat out in the hall. Pretty soon a nurse came and sat down with us. Then the cop came, and he had a sergeant with him. They kept looking at me. Cora was telling the nurse how it happened. "I was in there, in the bathroom I mean, getting a towel, and then the lights went out just like somebody had shot a gun off. Oh my, they made a terrible noise. I heard him fall. He had been standing up, getting ready to turn on the shower. I spoke to him, and he didn't say anything, and it was all dark, and I couldn't see anything, and I didn't know what had happened. I mean I thought he had been electrocuted or something. So then Frank heard me screaming, and he came, and got him out, and then I called up for the ambulance, and I don't know what I would have done if they hadn't come quick like they did."

"They always hurry on a late call."

"I'm so afraid he's hurt bad."

"I don't think so. They're taking X-Rays in there now. They can always tell from X-Rays. But I don't think he's hurt bad."

"Oh my, I hope not."

The cops never said a word. They just sat there and looked at us. . . .

ABEN KANDEL

You Twinkle Only Once

A jovial New Yorker of Romanian antecedents, Aben Kandel was born in 1899. Growing up in New York's East Side, he became a boxer, then went to Alaska where he roughed it for a time before returning to New York to devote himself to writing. Novels, plays, memoirs, came fast, among them a cutting portrait of the unctuous cleric *Rabbi Burns.* Kandel's literary reputation was made by *City for Conquest,* written in surcharged prose: one of the swiftest, richest pictures of New York extant. Alternating between Hollywood and lyrical and dramatic writing, he has recorded love in the world's capital of make-believe as no other has. In the following story, a woman is abstracted from her own body and from her own soul, both of which she views as commodities, as modes of attaining success and money. Love, men, any emotion, for her have no meaning except as instruments. She is corrupt beyond corruption. The boasted dissolution of "values" of the Twenties seems old-fashioned and genteel by comparison. Kandel, the last of the sybarites, is a superb cook; we regret there is no space for his original and compelling recipes.

KITTY DOONE lay on the narrow cot, face downward, left cheek relaxing into the lean pillow, arms outstretched. Her dark, brown hair was gathered up from her neck, the long muscular lines of which flowed into wide, coat-tree shoulders, bony and strong. The back swept away into a deep arch, curving with its first feminine approach, into her broad and rather well-rounded buttocks. The loin cloth began low and just covered her to the thighs. Her legs were hairless, beautiful and young. In her, it seemed that age crept up from the spine.

Bending over her, kneading with deft strokes the flesh between her shoulder blades, was a dwarf with large, alert hands. His fingers lived in runnels of flesh. He wore a damp athletic shirt which clung to his squat torso, white slacks and tennis shoes. He had his gnome's balding head, fuzzy brows over cunning eyes and a pursed, pulpy mouth.

Kitty purred. "That's the spot, Joe. Hit that note."

"Groovey, eh Miss Doone—feels kinda colossal?"

Considering the intimacy of hands and body, he might have called her Kitty, but he didn't quite dare. Not out loud, to her face. After all he was working for *her*. He represented five dollars a rub-down, twice a week. She was a five-thousand dollar every Wednesday noon, movie star.

Joe troweled with his stumpy fingers, and he could see the corners of her mouth softening into a gratified smile as her eyes closed. . . .

She nuzzled full face into the pillow and brought her buttocks up a little higher. They worried her. Evil twins. Because of them she went through torture, had nightmares. When she dieted, she thinned in all places, except the backside. Pounding, sweating, rubbing, helped only a little.

One acidulous critic in reviewing her last picture, had described her as the "curvaceous" Miss Doone. Curvaceous was a lethal word. It was box-office when applied to a young, blooming actress in musicals, a Grable or a Turner. Box-office too, when it had been applied in a winking sense to Mae West. But aimed at a serious, dramatic actress like Kitty Doone, it carried death.

Joe had lifted her shorts and she felt him dig into the soft flesh of her buttocks. This part of the massage was not too unpleasant. She found herself purring once more.

"I love to be rubbed by a man."

"Man got the touch."

"Don't get conceited."

"Professional pride—nothing else Miss Doone—professional pride. Have you ever tried it—being rubbed by a woman?"

"Only once. A big Finnish dame—heavy-handed and red-lipped. She didn't make any passes at me—but she certainly looked like a bull-diker. Kept calling me 'dearie.' Anyway—I didn't feel like stripping in front of a woman."

"Admiring that point of view," said Joe softly.

"What do you mean?"

"Rubbing part. Speaking of that Hungarian actress—Miss Zoop-Zoop who won the Oscar three years back. I used to take care of her. Five times a week—like one of the family. 'Joe,' she told me, 'weeth your wonderful, wonderful fingers—you have made me.'"

As he spoke, one hand slid slyly around the soft of her thigh. It all seemed so accidental. Kitty Doone wheeled around and smacked him hard.

"What the hell do you think I am? A starlet?"

"Leveling Miss Doone—honest." He rubbed his stinging cheek and his cunning eyes blinked innocence. "Meaning nothing." And then with a quavering sense of injury. "And how many times I have to tell you a professional masseur is like a doctor. No part of the female anagomy is secret or sacred—to me. The whole chemical coslogomy—"

"Get out." And then in a more composed voice, spiked by considerable hauteur, "You're dismissed—you bum."

"Tomorrow at three—Miss Doone?"

"Yes—and remember—I'll win my Oscar with acting. Control your wonderful fingers. I just want my tocas to look right for the parts I can play. Scram."

I sat in a corner pretending not to see the twitchings that rubbered up and down her elastic face. My official title was Co-Ordinator of Personnel, which properly interpreted meant that I was a parasite with embossed stationery. But so long as Kitty was willing to keep me on her payroll, I was willing to co-ordinate.

Her press agent, Plank Metcalf entered, like a revolving prism which had cornered the sun. His life had become this fetish for wild color combinations. He blinked at his own coats, genuflected before his own pajamas. He had been a brilliant newspaperman when he was snared by Kitty and in that first captivity they had endured a brief, five-day affair. Now, his face, which seemed cemented on, scarred him as a member of a separate race.

He looked at Kitty on the narrow cot, and his brittle voice cracked out, "Lovely, lovely." And yet, there could be no love in him, or in his voice. "Kitty—you've still got the shapeliest gams in Hollywood." He ran one finger along the curve of her calf and licked it.

"Not so loud, Plank. Mr. Queque is liable to put me back in musicals." She sat up on the bed, covering her bosom with the pillow.

"And what's wrong with that, Kitty?" He joined his thumbs and pretended to be looking through a camera. "Fade in Waiki-ki Beach. Fifty natives fresh-dipped in olive oil. A song or two, a dance or two, close shot of your navel, close shot of his nipples, one shouting scene, two crying scenes, one hundred feet of kissing, yum-yum, the big-head close-up and the box office bulges with mola."

"Out—definitely out. I've been an actress for years." She got off the bed. "Wait for me, Plank—we might have to sneeze up a story." . . .

When Kitty Doone returned, she was dressed simply, expensively, expertly. There were many artifices at her command and she wielded all of them with mastery in defense of her looks. For this particular interview with the all-powerful studio head, she wanted desperately to look a little melancholy, but also young, even ingenuous. And yet she knew that if the aggressive strength of her ambition cast even a faint shadow upon her face, she would defeat her own purpose.

She stood in the center of the room, demanding attention, begging for approval.

"What part you gunning for?" croaked Plank.

"Marianne—the little French girl in 'The Long Night.'"

"So," his fingers rasped at his chin, "the ma'amselle—a very young character—a chit of a girl—"

"Am I getting old?"

Her pebble-dark eyes challenged him under her small woolen hat.

"Sure."

"Does the public think I'm getting old?"

"What is this—a movie-star's catechism? What the hell does the public know?"

"Everything—you lofty louse."

"Fine—I'll settle for everything. According to the public you keep getting younger. Your fan mail still comes in laundry bags. Last month three new Kitty Doone fan clubs were organized. Ohio, Florida and California. Insurance office, models' agency, girls' reformatory."

"I'll spit that at Mr. Queque."

"Eighty-six clubs in all. What does that prove? No shortage in morons. . . ."

"Shut up and tell me how I look."

"Ravissante, ma petite, ravissante. But—why try this gambit on Mr. Queque? He knows what you look like."

"He's got a busy memory." Kitty lowered her voice and stretched her fingers. "The underground tells me that I'm being ootzed out of that part."

I felt the impact of her concentration and marveled at it again. To desire something so strongly that it never left you. To plan for its conquest step by step, cunningly, tenaciously. She might have been plotting to seize a small country. Diet, rehearsed dialogue, massage, clothes, practiced gestures, spies, bribes, fifth columnists—all for merely the preliminary skirmish, the interview with Mr. Queque. Her voice went on.

"I have the book sneaked to me in the galleys by an Algonquin tout. I get ink all over my fingers reading it in one night. I'm crazy about the part—and I put the studio wise to it. And this is my reward." After a sharp breath. "I should have bought the book with my own money. I told Delcorte to buy it." He was her business manager and agent. "But the sharpie, always figuring percentages, talks me out of it. Instead he buys me an apartment house, Casa Snooza, which incidentally, is raided the other day."

"Who is getting the part?"

"Brenda Loring. Dallas Texas society. A lousy actress—"

"But a sensational lay."

Her voice plunged over him, from above. "What's that got to do with it?" It grew strident, nourishing on anger. "She's not right for this part." Then, with a burst of special fury. "How do you know she's a sensational lay?"

"Don't bite me, Kitty. I'm only reacting to her cheese-cake."

"You—you eunuch—"

"No use Kitty—cut me up in small pieces—I won't resign." The eyes in his chalk-face grew soft. "Okay Kitty—you can't prove it by me."

"How do you know," she lashed on, "I'm not a sensational lay?"

She had undoubtedly forgotten their brief five-day affair.

I marveled at her candor, her superb self-detachment, even when she was appraising herself. There was no trace of feminine restraint, protective modesty. And yet, no one could look more alluringly the female. Everything she possessed as a woman was an asset, and she could discuss it dispassionately like money in a tin box. I couldn't help thinking. If only her teen-age adorants could have heard her.

"I didn't say you weren't."

"Well I am. And Mr. Queque knows I am."

"But—as you say—he's got a busy memory."

"So what? I'll remind him. I-I have-have got-got to-to play-play this girl!"

"Yes ma'am."

"We'll cook up a story on the ride to the studio. Even the old shnitzel about request letters from fans."

"Yes ma'am."

"You too."

There was a flick in my direction. I got up and followed them. It was always interesting to walk behind Kitty Doone.

There were two ante-rooms to Mr. Queque's private office. . . .

The secretary said, "Miss Doone—will you please go in."

From our side, it looked like a perfect entrance. The heavy door clicked open and Kitty walked in.

From what I knew of both, I could fill in the interview.

"Miss Doone—don't worry—your face is on right." He tried to smile, succeeded only in widening one nostril. Kitty thought, always *Miss* Doone. Even in the morning when he got up beside you, it was Miss.

"Mr. Queque—do I get the part?"

To some guns he walked right up to the muzzle.

"No." He hoped there would be no scene.

"Why?"

"Because you're not right for it. Now, don't get any crazy ideas that you're slipping. You're still beautiful and glamorous—and a mighty actress. That's why I picked up your option. But—you're too old for this particular part. It will hurt you."

"Hurts me more if I don't play it."

"Maybe in the vanity case. Besides—let me be the judge of what hurts you."

"Who—will play it?"

"Rosita Valdez."

"You're a liar. Brenda Loring."

"Oh, then you know."

"So it's definite."

"You're missing the main point. The boy. I'm springing a new leading man—a beautiful boy with beautiful nipples. Just out of college where he played football and took dramatics. Only, we found him in a gas station. Opposite you—well it would look like mother and son."

It was cruel but she tried to laugh with him. "Mother and son. Next year—you'll have me playing character women and grandmothers. What's the boy's name?"

"He won't mean more to you than a bag of peanuts. Gene Morton."

"I think I saw it somewhere—maybe one of the build-up pictures."

"Like I told you—he's a big blonde with beautiful nipples. For you, I'll buy a psychology play. It's morbid—but it's a hit."

She had exceeded her time. The inter-office phone buzzed. He began to fidget with some papers.

"But I had my heart set on this part." Kitty made a young, wistful face.

"Your what?" He smiled cynically. "Come Miss Doone—let's skip the big scenes. You'll be starred in two-million-dollar productions this year. Your heart will mend in all the little places. Forget this item—and let me say Yes and No to a few more people today."

Under his wry, puckered face, his double-breasted basket-weave, he was hard and cold and final. Kitty decided that someday she would kill him. She would drag a knotted thread through him with a long, red-hot needle. As she bared her teeth, her lips curled back. But she was not smiling.

"The front office decides. I march."

"In a sixteen-cylinder Cadillac. Why don't you say hitchhike?" There just was no sympathy in the man.

In the first outer office, a beautiful boy fumbled with his future. He was an inch over six feet, fair-skinned and blue-eyed, compounded of sea-and-sand strength and simplicity. Now, he had a child's face and an air of bewilderment as if the things which were happening to him, were in reality happening to his favorite hero.

Kitty guessed who he was, saw him straighten awkwardly and gape reverently at her. But she pretended not to be aware of him, reducing him as through the wrong end of a telescope. Then the secretary spoke.

"Miss Doone—I hope you won't mind. Mr. Morton begged so hard to meet you. May I introduce him?"

Kitty turned graciously, with just a hint of having been startled out of some enchanted inner reverie.

"I'm going to sound like a fan, Miss Doone. I—I'm really thrilled." He really looked it. She gave him her hand and smiled sweetly. His fingers trembled.

"Don't be frightened," she soothed. "He's already had his pint of blood."

"Oh—it isn't Mr. Queque—it's you. There—that's out. I used to see all your pictures twice. I never dreamed that I would actually stand near you in the same room—talk to you—"

She could see why he had taken a course in dramatics. He was a yearner.

"You must tell me sometime—how I—"

"May I—please—"

The phone buzzed and the secretary said very firmly, "Mr. Queque will see you now, Mr. Morton."

Kitty spoke quickly to the girl. "You may give him my phone number." Then, darting back to him in a breathless farewell, "But use it before Saturday. I change my private number every week."

We filed out. Again I brought up the rear.

In the car, Plank said, "Did you budge Mr. Queque?"

"No—not today."

She spoke so gently we were amazed. Instead of calling him a son-of-a-bitch, a dreamy look came into her eyes and she leaned back against the cushions smiling, fencing us out. She did sing to herself, "Mother and son. We shall see—we shall see."

Morton phoned the next morning and Kitty invited him to have dinner with her the same evening. In her hall of mirrors, she received him with one hand extended like the first lady of the cinema. He murmured his gratitude and tried to believe his luck. She looked beautiful and confident in a skin-tight gown cut rather low.

Friendly, ever so friendly, she patted a place for him beside her on the divan, sipped a cocktail with him, siphoned up his past with a single question.

While he spoke, his tongue loosened by the second drink, she seemed to be listening intently. Through the absorption in her own thoughts and plans, she could detect in his groping for words, an earnestness, a pathetic honesty which touched her, even as it helped her.

In his own crude way, he wanted desperately to become an artist.

"I know it sounds silly—Miss Doone—"

"Please call me Kitty."

"Kitty, then—thanks—a big, hulking tackle like me—and I don't mean Westerns and bar-room fights and Tarzan stuff—I mean artistic acting—the way Paul Muni acts." He looked tortured. "You've got it too," he said quickly.

She rewarded him with a fragrant pat on the cheek.

"And when the talent scout picked me up at the gas station—I was tickled about the break. But I was worried too. Now—I had my big chance—but what did I know? There was so much I still had to break through—mysterious walls—" He took another gulp. "Oh nuts—I'm just getting tangled up."

"But I understand perfectly—I do—I do." Kitty was glib with a host of rehearsed speeches and aphorisms about early struggles, frustrations, pain, and ultimate artistry as an ideal. In many a picture she had been, as she herself worded it, "lousy" with ideals.

She knew all the words and the effective expressions to go with them. Those breathless sentences which began in a rush of intimate emphasis and tapered off into three unutterable dashes. Kitty also knew how to lean forward to have her cigarette lit. She had done that in endless medium close shots, leaning forward with caressing, slumbrous eyes, with shoulders bared, revealing the piccolo of the sharp cleft between her ample breasts which promised fabulous rewards to the lucky fellow-artist. In small towns, army camps, mining centers, this particular shot used to draw uninhibited whistles and shrieks of desire from the men in the audience. Kitty had listened to them, and had been delighted.

Then she closed her hand around his faltering one, steadying the giant paw that held the match for her. She blew the smoke in his face and he stretched to his feet like a gathering force.

She gave him her hands and he drew her off the divan. She was wee and feathery, accenting her smallness, her womanness. His arms closed about her and she felt the great fumbling shock of his strength and weakness at the same time.

"I'm a goon, Kitty, and you'll throw me out on my ear. But I'm crazy about you—all you say—the way you look."

Kitty thrilled, purred.

"Gene—Gene boy—if we're counting the same way—I'm years and years older than—"

"No you're not." She wanted to hear him say that over and over. "You're younger—you'll always be young—"

"You're sweet."

"Tell me what to do."

The butler entered and spoke softly from the far corner of the room. "Dinner is served."

Upon a raised level, the dinner table waited, beautifully set for two. Glistening silverware, fine crockery, living fruit and tall candles.

Kitty took Gene's arm and began to walk toward her bedroom.

"We'll eat later, Bosco."

There was no smell of gunpowder, no burst of shrapnel, no cries of the wounded, no stench of the dead. In fact, the air was fragrant around Victorville, the sky serene and blue, the desert soothing as it loped in green-tinged arcs into the haunches of the San Bernardino range. Nevertheless, Kitty Doone had fired the opening salvos of her undeclared war on Mr. Queque. Without benefit of military training, degrees in tactics, strategy council, she had begun brilliantly with a sneak, surprise attack.

She had married Gene Morton.

Between the first cocktail and the belated dinner at midnight, she had completely revolutionized his life. She had convinced him that he would attain this far-off goal of artistry for which he yearned, only through inner suffering, outward show of temperament and, above all, ruthless impulse, abandon. She had converted him from the phlegmatic to the volatile in six hours. After her capture of him, she made *him* propose to her. Yes, a wild marriage, but she consented only on condition that he place his future completely in her hands. His tongue was full of yes.

At dawn she had chartered a plane and flown her quarry to Yuma where she had married him.

Now they were back at her ranch for the honeymoon. The ranch was, for Kitty, this year's secret retreat. In other years, it had been a cabin near Lake Arrowhead, a beach house at Malibu, an adobe squat at Palm Springs, or a suite in a Hollywood hotel, each the zone of a different honeymoon, each abandoned when the particular affair it sheltered burned itself into a memory.

It was a secret elopement. But Kitty told me and I was present when the bridal pair returned for breakfast. Kitty positively tingled with the elixir of her attack, but the groom only looked drowsed with love.

My instructions were to wait twenty-four hours and then inform Polly Ransome, the pleated columnist, who, Kitty reasoned, would check with the studio. Suddenly it would dawn upon the producer that the status of his leading man in a picture which was scheduled to start the following day had been impulsively changed.

Then Mr. Queque would have to be told.

They lay in the sun on the edge of the swimming pool. The sun warmed her back. Her face nuzzled into a pillow but Kitty could look through it, through the concrete walk, through the very earth right into Mr. Queque's office. She could see him grow rigid with rage as his secretary verified the message that although cameraman, cast and crew were ready, the leading man was not to be found. Not even his agent knew where he was. And since Kitty had endowed herself with this clairvoyance, she extended the luxury to the face of Miss Brenda Loring, the social register's gift to movies.

As if sensing the trend of her thoughts, Gene stirred restively and touched her arm. She turned around and with closed eyes faced the sun. Anyway, she felt better in this position.

"But honey—don't you think we should let Mr. Queque know?"

"I told you to leave it all to me—and my agent. The more trouble you give them, the more they respect you. Giving trouble is proof that you're alive. We're artists. They're business men. We're entitled to temperament. Deep down they'd be disappointed if they could handle us like a bolt of silk."

"But they can get awful mad, honey."

"Not mad enough to lose money on you. No business man ever gets that mad. That's why they won't suspend you. They've got too much invested in you right now. Besides—I shall insist upon you as my leading man."

"That's wonderful."

"And once the publicity gets out that you swept me off my feet—married me in a bang-up romance—the fans will be howling for us all over the country. It's great box-office—at least for one picture."

Kitty said all this believing only that part of it which applied to her. It was difficult for her to see another's viewpoint—unless that other was an adversary.

As she went on, speaking the soothing words in the soothing desert sun to the drowsed giant beside her, she felt very good.

This was not Kitty's first honeymoon, but she was enjoying it deeply. She enjoyed it so much that she wondered how it would feel to go away with a man, a lover in the honest sense of the word, just for himself, and have nothing to think of except to enjoy him, and in turn give him pleasure.

The thought balanced itself on her face, traveled with her when she turned impulsively and pressed her mouth into his shoulder which tasted of sun and desert and strength, and then vanished.

I read it first in Polly Ransome's column. It was the lead paragraph, written with a trowel, simmering with redundancies, arch as a short dress on a fat woman, and a trifle acidulous because it was not altogether exclusive. Polly could not forgive her because she had withheld the news even for a day. She would have liked to accompany the bridal pair into the nuptial bed and watch the dewy bride appraise the lover for the benefit of hordes of women readers.

As a matter of fact I didn't envy Plank the chore of passing this tidbit on. Ransome, the studio, and the general press. He would have to console himself with another plaid sport coat.

Mr. Queque, who hated all big men, nearly blew through his double-breasted coat when he was told. Then in a quick transition, since he was accountable only to the bankers, he computed the cost of paying off Brenda Loring. Kitty Doone had won the part, but just the same he chalked up another demerit against Kitty to be paid off as soon as she began to slip. Then he called in the studio press agent for a general announcement of a sudden change in cast. He also consoled the director.

"Start shooting tomorrow. Shoot around the principals for a day or two. I'll have them on the set by Wednesday."

"Do you really think Kitty is right for the part?"

"She'll have to be right."

"What will you do with the boy?"

"How can I get sore at a lump of meat?" But he was sore. He screamed in pain. "If I had him here—he's so big I wanna kill him." Then recovering, "I'll have him on loan-out to Monogram—or back at the gas station—unless he clicks. But that Kitty—what a wonderful mail-order bitch."

Then having checked with Plank, he had himself driven to Victorville because Kitty also wanted the luxury of a reconciliation scene.

Mr. Queque arrived just before dinner. The bridal pair sat at a table near the pool. They were dressed in cream-colored slacks and sport sweaters, their faces and arms bronzed. They looked healthy, carefree and beautiful.

Kitty came out of her chair and kissed her visitor. Mr. Queque was not a sensitive man but that kiss made him writhe.

"Are we forgiven?"

"Do I have to say all the words?"

Kitty looked at him like a doting daughter.

He swallowed hard. "Okay—Kitty you win. You get the part."

Gene was awkward and fumbling.

"I hope you're not very angry with me, Mr. Queque. I know it wasn't right, but I—well—I sort of passed out."

"You're a bad boy—but forget it. Kitty can do queer things to men." He stared at her through his small eyes and for a moment, his guarded hunger for vengeance shone with a sudden fierce light. "Well—the honeymoon's over. I want both of you on the set tomorrow morning."

"Won't you please stay for dinner?"

"Thanks, Kitty. I can't." With a weirdly springy step he climbed into his car. He couldn't leave fast enough.

When they were alone, Gene looked at Kitty with awe.

"It happened just the way you said." Then, slowly, "But wasn't he the understanding one?"

"No—I was," She chucked him under the chin and he felt very small and very young.

Suddenly he seized her in his arms and began to carry her indoors, toward the bedroom. But she kicked out of his clasp and her voice had a new ring to it.

"No, Gene—you heard Mr. Queque—the honeymoon's over. Let's study our parts."

"Our parts?" He looked disappointed.

"Our parts—first."

On schedule, Wednesday morning, they were on the set. The public, in quick coverage, had already been lavishly prepared for their appearance. Last minute changes in cast were considered the master strokes of the industry. An unexpected face, born of the decision of a genius, was a reward. Surprise—Kitty Doone plays Marianne in "The Long Night."

The real truth had to be pressed through so many different fine screens that by the time it filtered to the public through the gossip columns, the fans were beyond being shocked. The only ones who really cared were those bereaved.

Kitty was exultant, Gene, bludgeoned. Mr. Queque was frustrated. Brenda Loring, who had been ousted, wept for three hours and took an overdose of sleeping tablets. She was roused by her maid, and slapped back into life.

At the studio, Kitty at once surrounded herself with her retinue. While Joe massaged her in her dressing room, her agent, Delcorte, discussed the maneuver with Plank. In this intimate family, Gene had no place. The agent agreed that this part would give Kitty a new lease on her career, before the old one had quite run out.

But the most gratifying result of this victory was that Kitty had reestablished her youth by grabbing off the prize male discovery of the month. Once every thirty days the talent scouts swooped down upon some cow-eyed American youth, an inch over six feet and weighing nearly two hundred pounds. They found him on the range, in a gymnasium, on a football field, at a gas station, or in a little art theater. They signed him, coached him, photographed him, and then tossed him into the arena.

As soon as he made his appearance in Hollywood successful leading women, older in years, vastly older in cunning, experience and sophistication, would pounce on him and through this capture reaffirm their youth. Sometimes one of these gawks would run the gamut of half a dozen women before he found himself back on the range.

Kitty had Gene. For the moment, that was sufficient. You could call her designing, unscrupulous, ambitious, but you couldn't say she was old.

She had a talk with Mike Santo the cameraman, a wily Italian who had shot some of her biggest hits. She hated him and he loathed her. Years before they had had a tempestuous four-day affair, but he knew best how to photograph her. He could get between the camera and her hips. He knew that the right side of her face was better in close shots, he knew how to light her so that when necessary she would appear youthful, even ingenuous. He also knew that after each picture, instead of giving him an exasperating platinum watch of which he had eight, she would reward him with a fat check which he was glad to invest in a vineyard in the Santa Clara valley.

The first day's shooting was a little jerky. Gene was still awed by the fact that he was playing opposite Kitty Doone. And that Kitty was his wife. How had he done it? The ferment gave him animation. He was strained and tense. But in his officer's uniform he looked very handsome. For the first time in years, Kitty was not concentrating upon herself. She was a little proud of this boy, flattered by his worship. He really was an excellent catch. After the picture, she would take him away for a real honeymoon.

She passed Rita Drew on her way to her dressing room. Here was a girl who had started with her, but was already reduced to small parts. She could hear her think. "How does she get away with it? With what does she anoint herself to trap such flies?"

Aloud, she said, "Congratulations, Kitty. You've done it again."

"The picture?"

"The boy."

"Now and then I marry," she laughed. She would eat lunch in the commissary with Gene and show him off properly.

In the evening at home, Kitty had a brief conference with Delcorte concerning her real estate holdings and income tax, gave instructions to Plank to arrange for future interviews with fan magazines on "How It Feels to be Married Again," and finally with relief had dinner with Gene.

I was privileged to remain because as co-ordinator, I was also unobtrusive.

It seemed to me that for the first time in all the years I had observed Kitty, she was really happy. Seated near Gene, her face was relaxed. The lines of tension which usually haunted her, fled. Her body was relaxed. She had the serenity and confidence of a woman who is loved naively and completely.

Gene fetched her slippers and she cut his meat into squares and fed him morsel by morsel. When she was through eating, she said, "Carry me to that chair." He picked her up in his strong arms and she nicked at his cheek while he bore her.

Once she caught my eye and cried out with a wild gesture, "Gawd help me—I'se in love."

She was.

From the second day on, the shooting settled down to an accepted routine. The director was sound, a veteran of many hits, artistic without being arty, and able to extract good performances, even from beginners, without use of pliers. He felt a little sorry for Gene because he was so big and awkward and handsome. He tried to protect him in the close shots, minimized his bits of business so that his hands would be dead when he spoke, and toned down all of his emotional scenes because he knew that the boy as yet was incapable of projecting grief, passion or tragedy.

But the women would like him, especially his torso. And the men would let him live because he did not act like an actor but only like a gas station attendant who had won a sweepstakes.

They would shoot all morning, sometimes eight and nine camera set-ups, lunch, resume work in the afternoon and drive home together. In the car, Kitty arranged all her conferences with the parasites, and sometimes even discharged me so that she could be completely alone with Gene.

On the fifth day, Delcorte, who earned twenty-four thousand a year as his percentage of Kitty's salary, sought her out on the set just before the cast broke for lunch.

"Kitty—I've seen the rushes." He spoke like a mourner drowning in his own grief.

"How do you like, sourpuss?"

"Come with me, Kitty. Projection Room 6. We'll run them—just for you and me. Leave the nipples home."

Projection Room 6 was a miniature theater, equipped with five deep chairs. They sank into a couple, Delcorte buzzed the operator and the rushes began. Two and three prints of the same shot. Kitty looked at them with interest and serenity. Santo's photography of her was up to par. The close shots favored the right side of her face and her buttocks did not protrude.

And Gene was good. She chuckled. Maybe deep down, under his sun-tanned chest, his beautiful nipples, he was an actor. It might take years to bring it out. She didn't mind.

As she looked at him on the screen, there was an immediate mischievous dissolve to where he picked her up in his arms, carried her across the living room, whirled her twice around the bed and then set her down gently. Then she twined her arms around his neck and drew him down into the scenes that would be cut by censors in every state in the union and even unoccupied France.

The screen smacked up its last image and exploded into light. She really hadn't been watching. Those last scenes in her own mind had been the perfect superimposure upon the dull workaday rushes.

"Well?" Delcorte turned his lugubrious face to her.

"Only colossal," she said genially.

He suddenly pronged himself up. "Are you blind, Kitty?"

"What the hell you driving at?"

"The boy is stealing the picture from you. That's what I'm driving at, Lady Hot-pants. That's just what I'm driving at." And he nearly drove his cigar in her face. "And if you can't see it—he's got your eyes bandaged with yum-yum. He is wrapping up the picture. A goon with nipples, who was wiping windshields yesterday, is today stealing the picture from Kitty Doone. What the hell are you doing? Throwing all the fat scenes to him? He has got you playing straight man. You, a very sharp actress is being fingered—but deep."

Kitty suddenly exploded. "Shut up, flannel mouth." Then she slumped in her seat.

"And that's what the cats are meowing all over the lot. The boy is sensation-el."

"Let me see the rushes again."

Delcorte buzzed the operator. Both sat at attention. This time Kitty really looked at the scenes.

It was true. How had it happened? She was furious with herself. She was one of the sharpest scene-stealers in the business; Gene, the rawest of amateurs. But her guard had been completely down. And in his blundering way, guided, she shrewdly saw, by the director, he was centering attention upon himself in each encounter with her. She felt sick with rage. What really had happened to her? This was not Kitty. Delcorte was right. Kitty had been horizontal all through the shooting. The whole carefully worked-out plan to snag the part, even to the detail of marrying the boy—all for nothing unless she dominated the picture. A terrific horselaugh if the critics, after the premiere, ignored her and chirped, "A new star is born." And suckled by Kitty. Wow! This was an emergency.

She walked out with Delcorte blinking. The bucket of rushes was ice in her face.

Emergency, emergency. Calling for a campaign. Well, she was an old and ruthless trooper.

"Boy, am I off balance."

"You're on your back, Kitty, gazing up into the blue heaven of his blue eyes."

"Shut up."

"So, I've warned you."

"I know what to do."

"You've got to ootz him out of the picture."

"My own nipples."

"What do you always say?"

"You can fall in love many times—but you only twinkle once." Kitty had said it. Said it? She had rubbed it on bread, dissolved it in water, gulped it in tablets. If she softened an inch away from the rule of life, she would rot.

You twinkle only once.

It was fun while it had lasted. Too bad. Too, too bad. She began to steel herself for the first moves. She would have to undermine Gene Morton. He had ceased to be husband, lover, brother, son. He was not even a member of the human race. He was a rival. She would have to undermine him, destroy him, first as a man, then as an actor.

Fortunately he was her husband. They lived in the same house. She could make contact with the enemy, without exposing herself to attack.

Gene thought she had a headache as she stared at him across the dinner table. She had failed to cut his meat into tidbits. It was a little oversight but—Well, it was really kid stuff. How do you behave with a star? She really had him wondering. Does the bloom wear off in a few days? Maybe when he carried her into the bedroom—she would—

Kitty looked across the table at him. Her eyes revealed nothing, but her song was, what a handsome sacrificial lamb. His big, blue eyes so round with trust, his unlived, unscheming face so full of bewilderment and devotion. What had happened to her? The miracle. Had she really fallen in love? With him she would have gone right on—on—into oblivion.

She could see the billing reshape itself in taunting formation. KITTY DOONE in. Then the reviews in which he was discovered. Dissolve to KITTY DOONE and GENE MORTON in. Quick wipe to GENE MORTON and KITTY DOONE in. Flop over to GENE MORTON in—with Kitty Doone. Lap dissolve to—Also featured Kitty Doone. All this would happen within the space of a few pictures. She shuddered. It was cold up there where she had no billing. A marquee without her name was a frigidaire. All within the space of a few pictures. And by that time, the love she now felt, would be gone anyway.

To work, Kitty. At him.

"You worried about anything, honey?" He was bleating.

"Nothing. Do I look worried?" She seemed to shake herself out of a reverie, masking her face with a blank, faraway expression.

"Come on tell me." He waited. "Is it—" very slowly—"is it about the picture?"

"Well—yes." Then, without elaborating. "I'm tired, very tired. I'm going to bed." He sprang up, arms outstretched. "No, no, Gene, please. You don't have to go to bed, just because I do."

"But—darling—"

"No—you sit there—and read—or something."

She made a nice exit but left the room full of herself. Gene smoked a few cigarettes in each chair of the room, wondering what had happened. It was like slow internal bleeding. He couldn't see anything on the surface but he didn't feel right.

He was relieved to discover that the door to her room was open and she was still half-awake. It was dark and his torment fled. The night would devour the mysterious roots of doubt and in the morning the fairy tale would renew itself.

But Kitty knew that her first move was to undermine his confidence in himself as a man. There was a reservoir of ego which could carry an actor a great distance. Poison that, pollute it, and you have won your first battle.

And so when Gene lay down beside her in love and warmth and friendship; she was compact, invulnerable, ready.

On the set the following morning Gene looked haggard and tormented. The ground had been rocked under his feet. The attack was all around him. What had happened? His mind was sorely troubled. He raked it for small details. The teeth came up clean. There just was nothing specific. What did I do to get her sore? How can she change so? How can I change so? What have I lost? What's gone out of me?

I used to stir her—but last night—no ecstasy—she was dead. I was dead, too. A couple of corpses. But look at her this morning. A fever is in her. She's an actress, an artist. I'm not. I'll never be anything but a clod.

Kitty really was giving. Her performance was flawless. Out of the world, out of the script, too. In her scenes with Gene, she made him look ridiculous, like the tiniest amateur, like a fumbling lout. She underplayed him in tone and reaction so that he was shouting at the top of his voice and making the grimaces of a frantic idiot. Every move she made was calculated to throw him off balance. But she did it so subtly, so imperceptibly, with a lofty, exasperating calm and patience and tolerance. Just the merest look out of the corner of her eyes to another veteran player, a tall look with raised eyebrows and uplifted shoulders, saintly and full of suppressed suffering. Four and five takes of a scene, Kitty always willing to do it over and over, Gene ruining each one, until the director blew up.

Nothing fit to print. Gene felt as if his hands had been hacked off.

When they got home that evening, and sat down to their first drink, Gene said, "I'm really sorry, honey—I sure stank it up today." He fumbled over and sank down at her feet. "Sure stank it up—didn't I?"

He was begging her with his big animal eyes to stroke his hair and say, "Don't worry my little lamb. You'll be wonderful tomorrow." And she felt a sudden surge to do just that. But instead, she turned a hard, bitter face to him and her eyes filled with sudden coldness. She stood up so abruptly that she upset him and she crashed the cocktail glass to the floor.

"I'll say you did. And if it keeps up—you'll ruin the picture. My first flop."

"Don't say that, honey—for the first few days—I was doing—all right—"

"As long as I carried you."

He stared at her, brutally hurt, his vanity, his manhood, his hopes of artistry. He felt like bursting into tears. That would have been shameful.

"What's come over you, honey?"

"Don't honey me. You're no actor. That's what it is. And you're not much more of a man, either."

He suddenly sprang to his feet. She thought he would strike her. She hoped he would. She would strike back. She would claw and scratch and fling things at him until the room was in a shambles. Maybe then she wouldn't be able to see his eyes so clearly and she would feel better.

But he didn't strike her. He ran to the door.

"I'll get the hell out of here, now."

"Do it fast—and don't come back."

But he did come back. Three hours later, he tried to whimper his way into her room. But her door was locked. Kitty had been crying and she didn't dare let him see her eyes. She could tell he had been drinking which was all in the campaign.

"Please, honey—let me in."

"Get away from that door, you baboon. Just study your part."

Gene failed to come to the set the following day and the director shot around him. Kitty was noble and mysterious as she covered his absence. You couldn't get a word out of her but Kitty had instructed Plank to drop a tidbit here and there to a gossip columnist. Things were not well at the Doone menage. The gracious Lady Kitty had, possibly, made a mistake. Forgivable—a mistake de coeur. Given the mantle of her protection to an unknown, fought for him to play opposite her, yes, shared stellar honors with her, all for love. But—alas.

And no sooner was that piece of gossip published and broadcast than Kitty went straight to Mr. Queque.

"No matter what you hear," she said with pleading eyes, "don't throw the boy out of the picture. I'll carry him—cover him, do everything I can. Believe me, Mr. Queque—it will break his heart. I'm not saying this because he's my husband—but he's an actor."

Mr. Queque quietly and poisonously admired her. What a campaigner. Some day he would give her the studio and ask her to deal with the bankers.

By the end of the week the director himself reported to the chief executive.

"No dice. The boy has gone to pieces. I try with him, again and again, but it's a waste of time. He just hasn't got it in him. We'll have to get Tracy Holmes. A little old for the part but he's used to working with Kitty. We'll reshoot the scenes fast and the picture will stand up."

Mr. Queque sat alone at his desk, looked at the autographed picture Kitty had given him three years before. "To the genius of the industry, my discoverer, with deep love and gratitude, Kitty Doone." He grinned acidly and sent for Pomerantz.

"Get rid of that lump of meat. That pair of nipples cost me plenty." He stood up sharply. "He's so big and blond and strong—I wanna kill him. Farm him out to Monogram. Maybe he can ride a horse."

"It's as good as done, Mr. Queque."

For the remainder of the picture all of us formed a cordon around Kitty. Gene tried to break through a couple of times but it was no use. He was off the lot and he had already been informed that she would divorce him as soon as the film was in the can.

Once he wept on my shoulder, bawling (he was quite drunk), "What did I do? I only want to know what did I do?" I felt uneasy and Plank cracked his concrete face to let through an expression of nausea.

The preview was scheduled at Grauman's. The familiar charade of revolving lights, crêpe faces, installment ermine, a helpless microphone, and two lunging files of moronic waterheads champing to look at Kitty Doone.

Question of an escort came up. The studio had a husky with dark brown hair, round eyes with long lashes, fresh out of the Pasadena Playhouse, and being groomed for juvenile leads. But Kitty thought it would be in poor taste to appear with a new boy, as she said it, "so soon after poor Gene." She looked sad and perhaps she meant it. Plank was invited and I shall always give him credit for saying, "Not me—my little harpy, my resinous Lorelei. After what you did to Gene—not me."

"Plank, you do me an injustice. I may have made an actor out of the boy. When he gets over this—he'll realize—"

"Sure. He'll be eternally grateful to you."

She could have fired him but she didn't.

Plank was asked. I was drafted.

Touched by melodrama, I thought there might be a scene in the lobby. There among the footprints of the prehistoric stars, Gene would rush up, eyes bloodshot, hair disheveled, create a big scene, throw acid in her face, hurl obscenities. But no. Nothing happened, except the simpering usual.

The picture ran off smoothly, the product of able, though uninspired hacks. Here and there in a scene, I could find a trace of the inner agitation Kitty must have felt during the shooting. But the adept cutting and editing left no bumps.

The reviews were adequate.

DOROTHY PARKER

Dusk Before Fireworks

Queen of urbane, mocking *vers de société,* Dorothy Parker is one of those legendary characters to whom one attributes the *mots* and epigrams of the time. Talleyrand and Lincoln had the same distinction, and in every instance there is a sound reason. Dorothy Parker was for years the center of the social life of the smart writers of New York's "Algonquin crowd," America's equivalent of the Paris literary salon. All the more remarkable, therefore, is the sisterly understanding that one encounters in Miss Parker's classic short story "Big Blonde," and the poignancy of the girl who is the half-willing dupe of the telephone Lothario in "Dusk Before Fireworks," here reprinted. A professional editor and writer from youth, Dorothy Parker (born in 1893) has produced few books: she is a finished artist whose literary reputation rests upon distinction. The humanity implicit in her short stories strongly suggests that the apparent cynicism of her verses was merely a posture or perhaps the reverse side of the medal. For the last several years, she has devoted herself to the cause of the Spanish anti-fascist refugees.

HE was a very good-looking young man indeed, shaped to be annoyed. His voice was intimate as the rustle of sheets, and he kissed easily. There was no tallying the gifts of Charvet handkerchiefs, *art moderne* ash-trays, monogrammed dressing-gowns, gold key-chains, and cigarette-cases of thin wood, inlaid with views of Parisian comfort stations, that were sent him by ladies too quickly confident and were paid for with the money of unwitting husbands, which is acceptable any place in the world. Every woman who visited his small, square apartment promptly flamed with the desire to assume charge of its redecoration. During his tenancy, three separate ladies had achieved this ambition. Each had left behind her, for her brief monument, much too much glazed chintz.

The glare of the latest upholstery was dulled, now, in an April dusk. There was a soft blur of mauve and gray over chairs and curtains, instead of the daytime pattern of heroic-sized double poppies and small, sad elephants. (The most recent of the volunteer decorators was a lady who added interest to her ways by collecting all varieties of elephants save those alive or stuffed; her selection of the chintz had been made less for the cause of contemporary design that in the hope of keeping ever present the wistful souvenirs of her hobby and, hence, of herself. Unhappily, the poppies, those flowers for forgetfulness, turned out to be predominant in the pattern.)

The very good-looking young man was stretched in a long chair, legless and short in the back. It was a strain to see in that chair any virtue save the speeding one of modernity. Certainly it was a peril to all who dealt with it; they were far from their best within its arms, and they could never have wished to be remembered as they appeared while easing into its depths or struggling out again. All, that is, save the young man. He was a long young man, broad at the shoulders and chest and narrow everywhere else, and his muscles obeyed him at the exact instant of command. He rose and lay, he moved and was still, always in beauty. Several men disliked him, but only one woman really hated him. She was his sister. She was stump-shaped, and she had straight hair.

On the sofa opposite the difficult chair there sat a young woman, slight and softly dressed. There was no more to her frock than some dull, dark silk and a little chiffon, but the recurrent bill for it demanded, in bitter black and white, a sum well on toward the second hundred. Once the very good-looking young man had said that he liked women in quiet and conservative clothes, carefully made. The young woman was of those unfortunates who remember every word. This made living peculiarly trying for her when it was later demonstrated that the young man was also partial to ladies given to garments of slap-dash cut and color like the sound of big brass instruments.

The young woman was temperately pretty in the eyes of most beholders; but there were a few, mainly hand-to-mouth people, artists and such, who could not look enough at her. Half a year before, she had been sweeter to see. Now there was tension about her mouth and unease along her brow, and her eyes looked puzzled and beseeching. The gentle dusk became her. The young man who shared it with her could not see these things.

She stretched her arms and laced her fingers high above her head.

"Oh, this is nice," she said. "It's nice being here."

"It's nice and peaceful," he said. "Oh, Lord. Why can't people just be peaceful? That's little enough to ask, isn't it? Why does there have to be so much hell, all the time?"

She dropped her hands to her lap.

"There doesn't have to be at all," she said. She had a quiet voice, and she said her words with every courtesy to each of them, as if she respected language. "There's never any need for hell."

"There's an awful lot of it around, sweet," he said.

"There certainly is," she said. "There's just as much hell as there are hundreds of little shrill, unnecessary people. It's the second-raters that stir up hell; first-rate people wouldn't. You need never have another bit of it in your beautiful life if—if you'll pardon my pointing—you could just manage to steel yourself against that band of spitting hell-cats that is included in your somewhat overcrowded acquaintance, my lamb. Ah, but I mean it, Hobie, dear. I've been wanting to tell you for so long. But it's so rotten hard to say. If I say it, it makes me sound just like one of them—makes me seem inexpensive and jealous. Surely you know, after all this time, I'm not like that. It's just that I worry so about you. You're so fine, you're so lovely, it nearly kills me to see you just eaten up by a lot of things like Margot Wadsworth and Mrs. Holt and Evie Maynard and those. You're so much better than that. You know that's why I'm saying it. You know I haven't got a stitch of jealousy in me. Jealous! Good heavens, if I were going to be jealous, I'd be it about someone worth while, and not about any silly, stupid, idle, worthless, selfish, hysterical, vulgar, promiscuous, sex-ridden—"

"Darling!" he said.

"Well, I'm sorry," she said. "I guess I'm sorry. I didn't really mean to go into the subject of certain of your friends. Maybe the way they behave isn't their fault, said she, lying in her teeth. After all, you can't expect them to know what it's about. Poor things, they'll never know how sweet it can be, how lovely it always is when we're alone together. It is, isn't it? Ah, Hobie, isn't it?"

The young man raised his slow lids and looked at her. He smiled with one end of his beautiful curly mouth.

"Uh-huh," he said.

He took his eyes from hers and became busy with an ash-tray and a spent cigarette. But he still smiled.

"Ah, don't," she said. "You promised you'd forget about—about last Wednesday. You said you'd never remember it again. Oh, whatever made me do it! Making scenes. Having tantrums. Rushing out into the night. And then coming crawling back. Me, that wanted to show you how different a woman could be! Oh, please, please don't let's think about it. Only tell me I wasn't as terrible as I know I was."

"Darling," he said, for he was often a young man of simple statements, "you were the worst I ever saw."

"And doesn't that come straight from Sir Hubert!" she said. "Oh, dear. Oh, dear, oh, dear. What can I say? 'Sorry' isn't nearly enough.

I'm broken. I'm in little bits. Would you mind doing something about putting me together again?"

She held out her arms to him.

The young man rose, came over to the sofa, and kissed her. He had intended a quick, good-humored kiss, a moment's stop on a projected trip out to his little pantry to mix cocktails. But her arms clasped him so close and so gladly that he dismissed the plan. He lifted her to her feet, and did not leave her.

Presently she moved her head and hid her face above his heart.

"Listen," she said, against cloth. "I want to say it all now, and then never say it any more. I want to tell you that there'll never, never be anything like last Wednesday again. What we have is so much too lovely ever to cheapen. I promise, oh, I promise you, I won't ever be like—like anybody else."

"You couldn't be, Kit," he said.

"Ah, think that always," she said, "and say it sometimes. It's so sweet to hear. Will you, Hobie?"

"For your size," he said, "you talk an awful lot." His fingers slid to her chin and he held her face for his greater convenience.

After a while she moved again.

"Guess who I'd rather be, right this minute, than anybody in the whole world," she said.

"Who?" he said.

"Me," she said.

The telephone rang.

The telephone was in the young man's bedroom, standing in frequent silence on the little table by his bed. There was no door to the bed-chamber; a plan which had disadvantages, too. Only a curtained archway sequestered its intimacies from those of the living-room. Another archway, also streaming chintz, gave from the bedroom upon a tiny passage, along which were ranged the bathroom and the pantry. It was only by entering either of these, closing the door behind, and turning the faucets on to the full that any second person in the apartment could avoid hearing what was being said over the telephone. The young man sometimes thought of removing to a flat of more sympathetic design.

"There's that damn telephone," the young man said.

"Isn't it?" the young woman said. "And wouldn't it be?"

"Let's not answer it," he said. "Let's let it ring."

"No, you mustn't," she said. "I must be big and strong. Anyway, maybe it's only somebody that just died and left you twenty million dollars. Maybe it isn't some other woman at all. And if it is, what difference does it make? See how sweet and reasonable I am? Look at me being generous."

"You can afford to be, sweetheart," he said.

"I know I can," she said. "After all, whoever she is, she's way off on an end of a wire, and I'm right here."

She smiled up at him. So it was nearly half a minute before he went away to the telephone.

Still smiling, the young woman stretched her head back, closed her eyes and flung her arms wide. A long sigh raised her breast. Thus she stood, then she went and settled back on the sofa. She essayed whistling softly, but the issuing sounds would not resemble the intended tune and she felt, though interested, vaguely betrayed. Then she looked about the dusk-filled room. Then she pondered her finger nails, bringing each bent hand close to her eyes, and could find no fault. Then she smoothed her skirt along her legs and shook out the chiffon frills at her wrists. Then she spread her little handkerchief on her knee and with exquisite care traced the "Katherine" embroidered in script across one of its corners. Then she gave it all up and did nothing but listen.

"Yes?" the young man was saying. "Hello? Hello. I *told* you this is Mr. Ogden. Well, I *am* holding the wire. I've *been* holding the wire. *You're* the one that went away. Hello? Ah, now listen—Hello? Hey. Oh, what the hell *is* this? Come back, will you? Operator! Hello. *Yes,* this is Mr. Ogden. Who? Oh, hello, Connie. How are you, dear? What? You're what? Oh, that's too bad. What's the matter? Why can't you? Where are you, in Greenwich? Oh, I see. When, now? Why, Connie, the only thing is I've got to go right out. So if you came in to town now, it really wouldn't do much—Well, I couldn't very well do that, dear, I'm keeping these people waiting as it is. I say I'm late now, I was just going out the door when you called. Why, I'd better not say that, Connie, because there's no telling when I'll be able to break away. Look, why don't you wait and come in to town tomorrow some time? What? Can't you tell me now? Oh— Well— Oh, Connie, there's no reason to talk like that. Why, of course I'd do anything in the world I could, but I tell you I can't tonight. No, no, no, no, no, it isn't that at all. No, it's nothing like that, I tell you. These people are friends of my sister's, and it's just one of those things you've got to do. Why don't you be a good girl and go to bed early, and then you'll feel better tomorrow? Hm? Will you do that? What? Of course I do, Connie. I'll try to later on if I can, dear. Well, all right, if you want to, but I don't know what time I'll be home. Of course I do. Of course I do. Yes, I *do,* Connie. You be a good girl, won't you? 'By, dear."

The young man returned, through the chintz. He had a rather worn look. It was, of course, becoming to him.

"God," he said, simply.

The young woman on the sofa looked at him as if through clear ice. "And how *is* dear Mrs. Holt?" she said.

"Great," he said. "Corking. Way up at the top of her form." He dropped wearily into the low chair. "She says she has something she wants to tell me."

"It can't be her age," she said.

He smiled without joy. "She says it's too hard to say over the wire," he said.

"Then it may be her age," she said. "She's afraid it might sound like her telephone number."

"About twice a week," he said, "Connie has something she must tell you right away, that she couldn't possibly say over the telephone. Usually it turns out she's caught the butler drinking again."

"I see," she said.

"Well," he said. "Poor little Connie."

"Poor little Connie," she said. "Oh, my God. That saber-toothed tigress. Poor little Connie."

"Darling, why do we have to waste time talking about Connie Holt?" he said. "Can't we just be peaceful?"

"Not while that she-beast prowls the streets," she said. "Is she coming in to town tonight?"

"Well, she was," he said, "but then she more or less said she wouldn't."

"Oh, she will," she said. "You get right down out of that fool's paradise you're in. She'll shoot out of Greenwich like a bat out of hell, if she thinks there's a chance of seeing you. Ah, Hobie, you don't really want to see that old thing, do you? Do you? Because if you do— Well, I suppose maybe you do. Naturally, if she has something she must tell you right away, you want to see her. Look, Hobie, you know you can see me any time. It isn't a bit important, seeing me tonight. Why don't you call up Mrs. Holt and tell her to take the next train in? She'd get here quicker by train than by motor, wouldn't she? Please go ahead and do it. It's quite all right about me. Really."

"You know," he said, "I knew that was coming. I could tell it by the way you were when I came back from the telephone. Oh, Kit, what makes you want to talk like that? You know damned well the last thing I want to do is see Connie Holt. You know how I want to be with you. Why do you want to work up all this? I watched you just sit there and deliberately talk yourself into it, starting right out of nothing. Now what's the idea of that? Oh, good Lord, what's the matter with women, anyway?"

"Please don't call me 'women,'" she said.

"I'm sorry, darling," he said. "I didn't mean to use bad words." He smiled at her. She felt her heart go liquid, but she did her best to be harder won.

"Doubtless," she said, and her words fell like snow when there is no wind, "I spoke ill-advisedly. If I said, as I must have, something to distress you, I can only beg you to believe that that was my misfortune, and not my intention. It seemed to me as if I were doing only a courteous thing in suggesting that you need feel no obligation about spending the evening with me, when you would naturally wish to be with Mrs. Holt. I simply felt that— Oh, the hell with it! I'm no good at this. Of course I didn't mean it, dearest. If you had said, 'All right,' and had gone and told her to come in, I should have died. I just said it because I wanted to hear you say it was me you wanted to be with. Oh, I need to hear you say that, Hobie. It's—it's what I live on, darling."

"Kit," he said, "you ought to know, without my saying it. You know. It's this feeling you *have* to say things—that's what spoils everything."

"I suppose so," she said. "I suppose I know so. Only—the thing is, I get so mixed up, I just—I just can't go on. I've got to be reassured, dearest. I didn't need to be at first, when everything was gay and sure, but things aren't—well, they aren't the same now. There seem to be so many others that— So I need so terribly to have you tell me that it's me and not anybody else. Oh, I *had* to have you say that, a few minutes ago. Look, Hobie. How do you think it makes me feel to sit here and hear you lie to Connie Holt—to hear you say you have to go out with friends of your sister's? Now why couldn't you say you had a date with me? Are you ashamed of me, Hobie? Is that it?"

"Oh, Kit," he said, "for heaven's sake! I don't know why I did it. I did it before I even thought. I did it—well, sort of instinctively, I guess, because it seemed to be the easiest thing to do. I suppose I'm just weak."

"No!" she said. "You weak? Well! And is there any other news tonight?"

"I know I am," he said. "I know it's weak to do anything in the world to avoid a scene."

"Exactly what," she said, "is Mrs. Holt to you and you to her that she may make a scene if she learns that you have an engagement with another woman?"

"Oh, God!" he said. "I told you I don't give a damn about Connie Holt. She's nothing to me. Now will you for God's sake let it drop?"

"Oh, she's nothing to you," she said. "I see. Naturally, that would be why you called her 'dear' every other word."

"If I did," he said, "I never knew I was saying it. Good Lord, that doesn't mean anything. It's simply a—a form of nervousness, I suppose.

I say it when I can't think what to call people. Why, I call telephone operators 'dear.'"

"I'm sure you do!" she said.

They glared. It was the young man who gave first. He went and sat close to her on the sofa, and for a while there were only murmurs. Then he said, "Will you stop? Will you stop it? Will you always be just like this—just sweet and the way you're meant to be and no fighting?"

"I will," she said. "Honest, I mean to. Let's not let anything come between us again ever. Mrs. Holt, indeed! Hell with her."

"Hell with her," he said. There was another silence, during which the young man did several things that he did extraordinarily well.

Suddenly the young woman stiffened her arms and pushed him away from her.

"And how do I know," she said, "that the way you talk to me about Connie Holt isn't just the way you talk to her about me when I'm not here? How do I know that?"

"Oh, my Lord," he said. "Oh, my dear, sweet Lord. Just when everything was all right. Ah, stop it, will you, ba-bay? Let's just be quiet. Like this. See?"

A little later he said, "Look, sweet, how about a cocktail? Mightn't that be an idea? I'll go make them. And would you like the lights lighted?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I like it better in the dusk, like this. It's sweet. Dusk is so personal, somehow. And this way you can't see those lampshades. Hobie, if you knew how I hate your lampshades!"

"Honestly?" he said, with less injury than bewilderment in his voice. He looked at the shades as if he saw them for the first time. They were of vellum, or some substance near it, and upon each was painted a panorama of the right bank of the Seine, with the minute windows of the buildings cut out, under the direction of some master mind, so that light might come through. "What's the matter with them, Kit?"

"Dearest, if you don't know, I can't ever explain it to you," she said. "Among other things, they're banal, inappropriate, and unbeautiful. They're exactly what Evie Maynard *would* have chosen. She thinks, just because they show views of Paris, that they're pretty darned sophisticated. She is that not uncommon type of woman that thinks any reference to la belle France is an invitation to the waltz. 'Not uncommon.' If that isn't the mildest word-picture that ever was painted of that—"

"Don't you like the way she decorated the apartment?" he said.

"Sweetheart," she said, "I think it's poisonous. You know that."

"Would you like to do it over?" he said.

"I should say not," she said. "Look, Hobie, don't you remember me? I'm the one that doesn't want to decorate your flat. Now do you place me? But if I ever *did,* the first thing I should do would be to paint these walls putty color—no, I guess first I'd tear off all this chintz and fling it to the winds, and then I'd—"

The telephone rang.

The young man threw one stricken glance at the young woman and then sat motionless. The jangles of the bell cut the dusk like vicious little scissors.

"I think," said the young woman, exquisitely, "that your telephone is ringing. Don't let me keep you from answering it. As a matter of fact, I really must go powder my nose."

She sprang up, dashed through the bedroom, and into the bathroom. There was the sound of a closed door, the grind of a firmly turned key, and then immediately the noise of rushing waters.

When she returned, eventually, to the living-room, the young man was pouring a pale, cold liquid into small glasses. He gave one to her, and smiled at her over it. It was his wistful smile. It was of his best.

"Hobie," she said, "is there a livery stable anywhere around here where they rent wild horses?"

"What?" he said.

"Because if there is," she said, "I wish you'd call up and ask them to send over a couple of teams. I want to show you they couldn't drag me into asking who that was on the telephone."

"Oh," he said, and tried his cocktail. "Is this dry enough, sweet? Because you like them dry, don't you? Sure it's all right? Really? Ah, wait a second, darling. Let *me* light your cigarette. There. Sure you're all right?"

"I can't stand it," she said. "I just lost all my strength of purpose—maybe the maid will find it on the floor in the morning. Hobart Ogden, who was that on the telephone?"

"Oh, that?" he said. "Well, that was a certain lady who shall be nameless."

"I'm sure she should be," she said. "She doubtless has all the other qualities of a—Well. I didn't quite say it, I'm keeping my head. Ah, dearest, was that Connie Holt again?"

"No, that was the funniest thing," he said. "That was Evie Maynard. Just when we were talking about her."

"Well, well, well," she said. "Isn't it a small world? And what's on her mind, if I may so flatter her? Is *her* butler tight, too?"

"Evie hasn't got a butler," he said. He tried smiling again, but found it better to abandon the idea and concentrate on refilling the young woman's glass. "No, she's just dizzy, the same as usual. She's got a cocktail party at her apartment, and they all want to go out on the town, that's all."

"Luckily," she said, "you had to go out with these friends of your sister's. You were just going out the door when she called."

"I never told her any such thing!" he said. "I said I had a date I'd been looking forward to all week."

"Oh, you didn't mention any names?" she said.

"There's no reason why I should, to Evie Maynard," he said. "It's none of her affair, any more than what she's doing and who she's doing it with is any concern of mine. She's nothing in my life. You know that. I've hardly seen her since she did the apartment. I don't care if I never see her again. I'd *rather* I never saw her again."

"I should think that might be managed, if you've really set your heart on it," she said.

"Well, I do what I can," he said. "She wanted to come in now for a cocktail, she and some of those interior decorator boys she has with her, and I told her absolutely no."

"And you think that will keep her away?" she said. "Oh, no. She'll be here. She and her feathered friends. Let's see—they ought to arrive just about the time that Mrs. Holt has thought it over and come in to town. Well. It's shaping up into a lovely evening, isn't it?"

"Great," he said. "And if I may say so, you're doing everything you can to make it harder, you little peach." He poured more cocktails. "Oh, Kit, why are you being so nasty? Don't do it, darling. It's not like you. It's so unbecoming to you."

"I know it's horrible," she said. "It's—well, I do it in defense, I suppose, Hobie. If I didn't say nasty things, I'd cry. I'm afraid to cry; it would take me so long to stop. I—oh, I'm so hurt, dear. I don't know what to think. All these women. All these awful women. If they were fine, if they were sweet and gentle and intelligent, I shouldn't mind. Or maybe I should. I don't know. I don't know much of anything, any more. My mind goes round and round. I thought what we had was so different. Well—it wasn't. Sometimes I think it would be better never to see you any more. But then I know I couldn't stand that. I'm too far gone now. I'd do anything to be with you! And so I'm just another of those women to you. And I used to come first, Hobie—oh, I did! I did!"

"You did!" he said. "And you do!"

"And I always will?" she said.

"And you always will," he said, "as long as you'll only be your own self. Please be sweet again, Kit. Like this, darling. Like this, child."

Again they were close, and again there was no sound.

The telephone rang.

They started as if the same arrow had pierced them. Then the young woman moved slowly back.

"You know," she said, musingly, "this is my fault. I did this. It was me. I was the one that said let's meet here, and not at my house. I said it would be quieter, and I had so much I wanted to talk to you about. I said we could be quiet and alone here. Yes. I said that."

"I give you my word," he said, "that damn thing hasn't rung in a week."

"It was lucky for me, wasn't it?" she said, "that I happened to be here last time it did it. I am known as Little Miss Horseshoes. Well. Oh, please do answer it, Hobie. It drives me even crazier to have it ring like this."

"I hope to God," the young man said, "that it's a wrong number." He held her to him, hard. "Darling," he said. Then he went to the telephone.

"Hello," he said into the receiver. "Yes? Oh, hello there. How are you, dear—how are you? Oh, did you? Ah, that's too bad. Why, you see I was out with these friends of my—I was out till quite late. Oh, you did? Oh, that's too bad, dear, you waited up all that time. No, I did *not* say that, Margot, I said I'd come if I possibly could. That's exactly what I said. I did so. Well, then you misunderstood me. Well, you must have. Now, there's no need to be unreasonable about it. Listen, what I said, I said I'd come if it was possible, but I didn't think there was a chance. If you think hard, you'll remember, dear. Well, I'm terribly sorry, but I don't see what you're making so much fuss about. It was just a misunderstanding, that's all. Why don't you calm down and be a good little girl? Won't you? Why, I can't tonight, dear. Because I can't. Well, I have a date I've had for a long time. Yes. Oh, no, it isn't anything like that! Oh, now, please, Margot! Margot, please don't! Now don't do that! I tell you I won't be here. All right, come ahead, but I won't be in. Listen, I can't talk to you when you're like this. I'll call you tomorrow, dear. I tell you I won't be IN, dear! Please be good. Certainly I do. Look, I have to run now. I'll call you, dear 'By."

The young man came back to the living-room, and sent his somewhat shaken voice ahead of him.

"How about another cocktail, sweet?" he said. "Don't you think we really ought—" Through the thickening dark, he saw the young woman. She stood straight and tense. Her fur scarf was knotted about her shoulders, and she was drawing on her second glove.

"What's this about?" the young man said.

"I'm so sorry," the young woman said, "but I truly must go home."

"Oh, really?" he said. "May I ask why?"

"It's sweet of you," she said, "to be interested enough to want to know. Thank you so much. Well, it just happens, I can't stand any more of this. There is somewhere, I think, some proverb about a worm's eventually turning. It is doubtless from the Arabic. They so often are. Well, good night, Hobie, and thank you so much for those delicious cocktails. They've cheered me up wonderfully."

She held out her hand. He caught it tight in both of his.

"Ah, now listen," he said. "Please don't do this, Kit. Please don't, darling. Please. This is just the way you were last Wednesday. Remember?"

"Yes," she said. "And for exactly the same reason. Please give me back my hand. Thank you. Well, good night, Hobie, and good luck, always."

"All right," he said. "If this is what you want to do."

"Want to do!" she said. "It's nothing *I* want. I simply felt it would be rather easier for you if you could be alone, to receive your telephone calls. Surely you cannot blame me for feeling a bit *de trop*."

"My Lord, do you think I want to talk to those fools?" he said. "What can I do? Take the telephone receiver off? Is that what you want me to do?"

"It's a good trick of yours," she said. "I gather that was what you did last Wednesday night, when I kept trying to call you after I'd gone home, when I was in holy agony there."

"I did not!" he said. "They must have been calling the wrong number. I tell you I was alone here all the time you were gone."

"So you said," she said.

"I don't lie to you, Kit," he said.

"That," she said, "is the most outrageous lie you have ever told me. Good night, Hobie."

Only from the young man's eyes and voice could his anger be judged. The beautiful scroll of his mouth never straightened. He took her hand and bowed over it.

"Good night, Kit," he said.

"Good night," she said. "Well, good night. I'm sorry it must end like this. But if you want—other things—well, they're what you want. You can't have both them and me. Good night, Hobie."

"Good night, Kit," he said.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It does seem too bad. Doesn't it?"

"It's what you want," he said.

"I?" she said. "It's what *you* do."

"Oh, Kit, can't you understand?" he said. "You always used to. Don't you know how I am? I just say things and do things that don't mean anything, just for the sake of peace, just for the sake of not having a feud. That's what gets me in trouble. You don't have to do it, I know. You're luckier than I am."

"Luckier?" she said. "Curious word."

"Well, stronger, then," he said. "Finer. Honester. Decenter. All those. Ah, don't do this, Kit. Please. Please take those things off, and come sit down."

"Sit down?" she said. "And wait for the ladies to gather?"

"They're not coming," he said.

"How do you know?" she said. "They've come here before, haven't they? How do you know they won't come tonight?"

"I don't know!" he said. "I don't know what the hell they'll do. I don't know what the hell you'll do, any more. And I thought you were different!"

"I was different," she said, "just so long as you thought I was different."

"Ah, Kit," he said, "Kit. Darling. Come and be the way we were. Come and be sweet and peaceful. Look. Let's have a cocktail, just to each other, and then let's go out to some quiet place for dinner, where we can talk. Will you?"

"Well—" she said. "If you think—"

"I think," he said.

The telephone rang.

"Oh, my *God!*" shrieked the young woman. "Go answer it, you damned—you damned *stallion!*"

She rushed for the door, opened it, and was gone. She was, after all, different. She neither slammed the door nor left it stark open.

The young man stood, and he shook his remarkable head slowly. Slowly, too, he turned and went into the bedroom.

He spoke into the telephone receiver drearily at first, then he seemed to enjoy both hearing and speaking. He used a woman's name in address. It was not Connie; it was not Evie; it was not Margot. Glowingly he besought the unseen one to meet him; tepidly he agreed to await her coming where he was. He besought her, then, to ring his bell first three times and then twice, for admission. No, no, no, he said, this was not for any reason that might have occurred to her; it was simply that some business friend of his had said something about dropping in, and he wanted to make sure there would be no such intruders. He spoke of his hopes, indeed his assurances, of an evening of sweetness and peace. He said "good-by," and he said "dear."

The very good-looking young man hung up the receiver, and looked long at the dial of his wrist-watch, now delicately luminous. He seemed to be calculating. So long for a young woman to reach her home, and fling herself upon her couch, so long for tears, so long for exhaustion, so long for remorse, so long for rising tenderness. Thoughtfully he lifted the receiver from its hook and set it on end upon the little table.

Then he went into the living-room, and sped the dark before the tiny beams that sifted through the little open windows in the panoramas of Paris.

BOOK VI: *Enigmas*

NOTE ON H. H. RICHARDSON'S "MAURICE GUEST"

Maurice Guest, a young English pianist and music student, arrives in Leipzig to study under Schwartz. He meets an English girl who helps to support him through his study years, and he also meets Louise Dufrayer. An Australian music student, she is an impassioned lover, toasted by the students as "The Rose of Sharon." Schilsky, her lover, a wild and brilliant violin student, is careless of public opinion. Grown tired of his mistress, he sneaks away from Leipzig after a bachelor dinner in the course of which Louise's reputation has been bandied about. Maurice Guest attempts to defend her, but he is drunk, and it all ends shamefully.

Schilsky's desertion breaks Louise's morale. She hangs about aimlessly, then closets herself in her room; though she has money, she is dunned for debts. Eventually, she takes Guest as a lover. But by wasting his time in gay social living, she ruins his already perilous chances of earning his diploma. Almost unknowingly, she has made use of Guest's true, inconsolable passion for her.

Schilsky returns, and Louise's continuing passion for her former lover, leads Guest to commit suicide.

H. H. RICHARDSON

Maurice Guest

An Australian pianist, Miss Richardson was educated at Leipzig in the heyday of German musical influence. She utilized this experience in *Maurice Guest* (1908), which many critics consider the last great novel in the "grand manner" and certainly the finest novel in English about the world of music. Miss Richardson assumed a man's name so that the critics might not find a feminine point of view in her work if it were not really present. Her novel concerns Louise, an Australian student of music; Maurice Guest, a British pianist; and Schilsky, a violinist who is gifted, successful, and devious. Louise's passion for Schilsky, once he abandons her, leads her to accept the suit of Maurice Guest. It proves a fatal passion, and upon Guest's suicide, Louise marries Schilsky. The gamut of emotions is vast; the novel has the stature of Greek drama: their fates are inherent in the characters. Miss Richardson has also written an impressive trilogy of Australian life in the last century, entitled *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*.

SHE made a despondent gesture and turned away. "Well then, if either of us should go, I'm the one. You have your work. I do nothing; I have no ties, no friends—I never even seem to have been able to make acquaintances. And if I went, you could stay quietly on. In time you would forget me.—If I only knew where to go! I am so alone, and it is all so hard. I shall never know what it is to be happy myself, or to make anyone else happy—never!" and she burst into tears.

It was his turn now to play the comforter. Drawing up a chair he took her hand, and said all he could think of to console her. He could bear anything, he told her, but to see her unhappy. All would yet turn out to be for the best. And on one point she was to set her mind at rest: her going away would not benefit him in the least. He would never consent to stay on alone, where they had been so much together.

"I've nothing to look forward to, nothing," she sobbed. "There's nothing I care to live for."

As soon as she was quieter, he left her.

For an hour or more Louise lay huddled on the sofa, with her face pressed to her arm.

When she sat up again, she pushed back her heavy hair and, clasping her hands loosely round her knees, stared before her with vacant eyes. But not for long; tired though she was, and though her head ached from crying, there was still a deep residue of excitement in her. The level beams of the sun were pouring blindly into the room; the air was dense and oppressive. She rose to her feet and moved about. She did not know what to do with herself: she would have liked to go out and walk; but the dusty, jarring light of the summer streets frightened her. She thought of music, of the theatre, as a remedy for the long evening that yawned before her: then dismissed the idea from her mind. She was in such a condition of restlessness, this night, that to be forced to sit still between two other human beings would make her want to scream.

The sun was getting low; the foliage of the trees in the opposite gardens was black, with copper edges, against the refulgence of the sky. She leaned her hands on the sill and gazed fixedly at the stretch of red and gold, which, like the afterglow of a fire, flamed behind the trees. Her eyes were filled with it. She did not think or feel: she became one, by looking, with the sight before her. As she stood there, nothing of her existed but her two widely opened eyes; she was a miracle wrought by the sunset; she *was* the sunset—in one of those vacancies of mind which all intense gazers know.

How long she had remained thus she could not have told, when a strange thing happened to her. From some subconscious layer of her brain, which started into activity because the rest of it was so passive, a small, still thought glided in and took possession of her mind. At first it was so faint that she hardly grasped it; but, once established there, it became so vivid that, with one sweep, it blotted out trees and sunset; so real that it seemed always to have been present to her. Without conscious effort on her part, the solution to her difficulties had been found; a decision had been arrived at, but not by her; it was the work of some force outside herself.

She turned from the window and pressed her hands to her blinded eyes. Good God! it was so simple. To think that this had not occurred to her before!—that, throughout the troubled afternoon, the idea had never once suggested itself. There was no need of loneliness and suffering for either of them. He might stay; they both might stay; she could make him happy, and ward off the change she so dreaded.—Who was she to stick at it?

But she remained dazed, doubtful as it were of this peaceful ending; her hand still covered her eyes. Then, with one of the swift movements by which it was her custom to turn thought into action, she went to the writing-table and scrawled a few, big words:

Maurice, I have found a way. Come back to-morrow evening.

She hesitated only over the last two words, and, before writing them, sat with her chin in her hand and deliberately considered. Then she addressed the envelope and stamped it: it would be soon enough if he got it through the post, the following morning.

But, with her, to resolve was to act; she was ill at ease under enforced procrastination; and had often to fight a burning impatience when circumstances delayed the immediate carrying out of her will. In this case, however, she had voluntarily postponed Maurice's return for twenty-four hours, when he might have been with her in less than one: for in her mind lurked the seductive thought of a long, summer day with an emotion at its close to which she could look forward.

In the meantime, she was puzzled how to fill the evening. After all, she decided to go to the theatre, where she arrived in time to hear the last two acts of *Aïda*. From a seat in the *parquet* she let the showy music play round her. Afterwards she walked home through the lilac-haunted night, went to bed, and at once fell asleep.

Next morning she wakened early—that was the sole token of disturbance she could detect in herself. It was very still; there was a faint twittering of birds, but the noises of the street had not yet begun. She lay in the subdued yellow light of her room, with one arm across her eyes.

Fresh from sleep, she understood certain things as never before. She saw all that had happened of late—her slow recovery, her striving and seeking, her growing friendship with Maurice—in a different light. On this morning, too, she was able to answer one of the questions that had puzzled her the night before. She saw that the relations in which they had stood to each other, during the bygone months, would have been impossible had she really cared for him. She liked him, yes, had always liked him; and, in addition, his patience and kindness had made her deeply grateful to him. But that was all. Neither his hands, nor his voice, nor his eyes, nor anything he did had had the power to touch her—*so* to touch her, that her own hands and eyes would have met his half-way; that the old familiar craving, which was partly fear and partly attraction, would have made her callous to his welfare. Had there been a breath of this, things would have come to a climax long ago. Hot and eager as she was, she could not have lived on coolly at his side—and at this moment she found it hard to make up her mind whether she admired Maurice or not, for having been able to carry his part through.

And yet, though no particle of personal feeling drew her to him, she, too, had suffered in her own way during these weeks of morbid tension, when he had been incapable either of advancing or retreating. How great the strain had been, she had recognised only in the instant when he spanned the breach in clear, unmistakable words. If he had not done it, she would have been forced to; for she could never find herself to rights for long in half circumstances: if she were not to grow bewildered, she had to see her road simple and straight before her. His words to her after they had been on the river together—more, perhaps, his bold yet timid kisses—had given her back strength and assurance. She was no longer the miserable instrument on which he tried his changes of mood; she was again the giver and the bestower, since she held a heart and a heart's happiness in the hollow of her hand.

What people would think and say was a matter of indifference to her: besides they practically believed the worst of her already. No; she had nothing to lose and, it might be, much to gain. And after all it meant so little! The first time, perhaps; or if one cared too much. But in this case, where she had herself well in hand, and where there was no chance of the blind desire to kill self arising, which had been her previous undoing; where the chief end aimed at was the retention of a friend—here, it meant nothing at all.

The thought that she might possibly have scruples on his part to combat crossed her mind. She stretched her arm straight above her head, then laid it across her eyes again. She would like him none the less for these scruples, did they exist: now she believed that, at heart, she had really appreciated his reserve, his holding back, where others would have been so ready to pounce in. For the first time, she considered him in the light of a lover, and she saw him differently. As if the mere contemplation of such a change brought her nearer to him, she was stirred by a new sensation, which had him as its object. And under the influence of this feeling, she told herself that perhaps just in this gentler, kindlier love, which only sought her welfare, true happiness lay. She strained to read the future. There would be storms neither of joy nor of pain; but watchful sympathy, and the fine, manly tenderness that shields and protects. Oh, what if, after all her passionate craving for happiness, it was here at her feet, having come to her as good things often do, unexpected and unsought?

She could lie still no longer; she sprang up, with an alacrity that had been wanting in her movements of late. And throughout the long day this impression, which was half a hope and half a belief, was present to her mind, making everything she did seem strangely festive. She almost feared the moment when she would see him again, lest anything he said should dissipate her hope.

When he came, her eyes followed him searchingly. With an instinct that was now morbidly sharpened, Maurice was aware of the change in her, even before he saw her eyes. His own were one devouring question.

She made him sit down beside her.

"What is it, Louise? Tell me—quickly. Remember, I've been all day in suspense," he said as seconds passed and she did not speak.

"You got my note then?"

"What is it?—what did you mean?"

"Just a little patience, Maurice. You take one's breath away. You want to know everything at once. I sent for you because—oh, because . . . I want you to let us go on being friends."

"Is that all?" he cried, and his face fell. "When I have told you again and again that's just what I can't do?"

She smiled. "I wish I had known you as a boy, Maurice—oh, but as quite a young boy," she said in such a changed voice that he glanced up in surprise. Whether it was the look she bent on him, or her voice, or her words, he did not know; but something emboldened him to do what he had often done in fancy: he slid to his knees before her, and laid his head on her lap. She began to smooth back his hair, and each time her hand came forward, she let it rest for a moment.—She wondered how he would look when he knew.

"You can't care for me, I know. But I would give my life to make you happy."

"Why do you love me?" She experienced a new pleasure in postponing his knowing, postponing it indefinitely.

"How can I say? All I know is how I love you—and how I have suffered."

"My poor Maurice," she said in the same caressing way. "Yes, I shall always call you poor.—For the love I could give you would be worthless compared with yours."

"To me it would be everything.—If you only knew how I have longed for you, and how I have struggled!"

He took enough of her dress in his hands to bury his face in. She sat back and looked over him into the growing dusk of the room: and, in the alabaster of her face, nothing seemed to live except her eyes, with their half-rings of shadow.

Suddenly, with the unexpectedness that marked her movements when she was very intent, she leant forward again, and, with her elbow on her knee, her chin on her hand, asked in a low voice: "Is it for ever?"

"For ever and ever."

"Say it's for ever." She still looked past him, but her lips had parted, and her face wore the expression of a child's listening to fairy-tales. At her own words, a vista seemed to open up before her, and at the other end, in blue haze, shone the great good that had hitherto eluded her.

"I shall always love you," said the young man. "Nothing can make any difference."

"For ever," she repeated. "They are pretty words."

Then her expression changed; she took his head between her hands.

"Maurice . . . I'm older than you, and I know better than you what all this means. Believe me, I'm not worth your love. I'm only the shadow of my old self. And you are still so young and so . . . so untried. There's still time to turn back, and be wise."

He raised his head.

"What do you mean? Why are you saying these things? I shall always love you. Life itself is nothing to me, without you. I want you . . . only you."

He put his arms round her and tried to draw her to him. But she held back. At the expression of her face, he had a moment of acute uncertainty, and would have loosened his hold. But now it was she who knotted her hands round his neck, and gave him a long, penetrating look. He was bewildered; he did not understand what it meant; but it was something so strange that, again, he had the impulse to let go. She bent her head and laid her face against his; cheek rested on cheek. He took her face between his hands and stared into her eyes, as if to tear from them what was passing in her brain. Over both, in the same breath, swept the warm, irresistible wave of self-surrender. He caught her to him, roughly and awkwardly, in a desperate embrace, which the kindly dusk veiled and redeemed. . . .

* * * * * * *

For two nights she slept little. On the third, worn out, she fell soon after midnight into a deep sleep, from which she wakened refreshed.

When Maurice came, about half-past twelve, her eyes followed him with a new curiosity. She wondered what he would say when he knew, and what change would come over his face. But she made no beginning to enlightening him. In his presence she was seized by an ungovernable desire to be distracted, to be taken out of herself. Also it was not, she began to grasp, a case of stating a simple fact, in simple words; it meant all the circumstantiality of complicated explanation; it meant a still more murderous tearing up of emotion. And besides this there was another factor to be reckoned with, and that was the peculiar mood he was in. For, as soon as he entered the room, she felt that he was different from what he had been the day before.

She heard the irritation in his voice as he tried to persuade her to come out to dinner with him. In fancy she saw it all: saw them walking to the restaurant at a brisk pace, in order to waste none of his precious time; saw dinner eaten quickly for the same reason; saw them parting again at the house-door; then herself in the room alone, straying from sofa to window and back again, through the long hours of the long afternoon. A kind of mental nausea seized her at the thought that the old round was to begin afresh. She brought no answer over her lips. And after waiting some time in vain for her to speak, Maurice rose and, still under the influence of his ill humour, drew up the blinds and opened a window. A cold, dusty sunlight poured into the room.

Louise gave a cry, and put her hands to her eyes.

"The room is so close and you're so pale," he said in self-excuse. "Do you know you've been shut up here for three days now?"

"My head aches."

"It will never be any better as long as you lie there. Dearest, what is it? *What's* the matter with you?"

"You're unhappy about something," he went on, a moment later. "What is it? Won't you tell me?"

"Nothing," she murmured. She lay and pressed her palms to her eyeballs, so firmly that when she removed them the room was a blur. Maurice, standing at the window, beat a tattoo on the pane. Then, with his back to her, he began to speak. He blamed himself for what he called the folly of the past weeks. "I gave way when I should have been firm. And this is the result. You have got into a nervous, morbid state. But it's nonsense to think it can go on."

For the first time, she was conscious of a critical attitude on his part; he said "folly" and "nonsense." But she made no comment; she lay and let his words go over her. They had so little import now. All the words that had ever been said could not alter a jot of what she felt—of her intense inward experience.

Her protracted silence, her heavy indifference infected him; and for some time the only sound to be heard was that of his fingers drumming on the glass. When he spoke again, he seemed to be concluding an argument with himself; and indeed, on this particular day, Maurice found it hard to detach his thoughts from himself, for any length of time.

"It's no use, dear. Things can't go on like this any longer. I've got to buckle down to work again. I've . . . I . . . I haven't told you yet: Schwarz is letting me play the Mendelssohn."

She thought she would have to cry aloud. Here it was again: the chilling atmosphere of commonplace which her nerves were expected to live and be well in; the well-worn phrases, the "must this," and "must that," the confident expectation of interest in doings that did not interest her at all. She could not—it would kill her to begin it anew! And, in spite of her efforts at repression, a sound forced its way over her lips.

At this, Maurice went quickly back to her.

"Forgive me . . . talking about myself, when you are not well."

He knelt down beside the bed, and took her hands from her face. She did not open her eyes, kept quite still. At this moment she felt mainly curious: would the strange aversion to his touch return? He was kissing her palms, pressing them to his face. She drew a long, deep sigh: it did not come back. On the contrary, the touch of his hand was pleasant to her. He stroked her cheek, pushed back a loose piece of hair from her forehead; and, as he did this, she was aware of the old sense of well-being. Beneath his hand, irksome thoughts fell away. Backwards and forwards it travelled. And, little by little and so gradually that at first she herself was not aware of them, other wishes came to life in her again. She began to desire more than mere peace. The craving came over her to forget her self-torturings, and to forget them in a dizzy whirl. Reaching up, she put her arms round his neck and drew him down. He kissed her eyelids. At this she opened her eyes, enveloping him in a look he had come to know well. For a second he sustained it: his life seemed concentrated in the liquid fire of these eyes, in these eager parted lips. She pressed them to his, and he felt a smart, like a bee's sting.

With a jerk, he thrust her arms away and rose to his feet; to keep his balance he was obliged to grasp the back of a chair. Taking out his handkerchief, he pressed it to his lip.

"Maurice!"

"It's late . . . I must go . . . I must work, I tell you." He stood staring at the drop of blood on his handkerchief.

"Maurice!"

He looked round him in a confused way; he was strangely angry, and hasty to no purpose. "Won't you . . . then you won't come out with me?"

"Maurice!" The word was a cry.

"Oh, it's foolish! You don't know what you're doing." He had found his coat, and was putting it on, with unsure hands. "Then, if . . . till this evening then . . . As usual. I'll come as usual."

The door shut behind him; a minute later the street door banged. At the sound Louise seemed to waken. Starting up she threw a wild look round the empty room; then turned on her face and bit a hole in the linen of the pillow. . . .

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

The Girl

Meridel Le Sueur first came to public attention when Edward J. O'Brien chose one of her stories for his 1927 volume of the best stories of the year. She has published widely since but has issued only one collection, *Salute to Spring* (1940). An edition of her *Annunciation,* the most exquisite record by an American woman of the exuberance of pregnancy, was privately printed in Los Angeles. *The Girl* (1935) is a triumph of English prose: she conveys the sensual world by a robust, long line, which enlists the reader at once. The single incident that calls up the latent life of a spinster, the effect of the mere proximity of the simple young man, the interpenetration of the two passengers with the California scenery, and the final parting, have few rivals in recent narration. She is preparing a new work on folklore. Born 1900 in Iowa, Miss Le Sueur has remained in the Northwest; she teaches in Minnesota. Politically she is of the extreme Left, a militant, known for vivid reportage.

SHE was going the inland route because she had been twice on the coast route. She asked three times at the automobile club how far it was through the Tehachapi Mountains, and she had the route marked on the map in red pencil. The car was running like a T, the garage man told her. All her dresses were back from the cleaners, and there remained only the lace collar to sew on her black crepe so that they would be all ready when she got to San Francisco. She had read up on the history of the mountains and listed all the Indian tribes and marked the route of the Friars from the Sacramento Valley. She was glad now that Clara Robbins, the "Math." teacher, was not going with her. She liked to be alone, to have everything just the way she wanted it, exactly.

There was nothing she wanted changed. It was a remarkable pleasure to have everything just right, to get into her neat fine-looking little roadster, start out in the fine morning, with her map tucked into the seat, every road marked. She was lucky too, how lucky she was. She had her place secure at Central "High," teaching history. On

September 18, she knew she would be coming back to the same room, to teach the same course in history. It was a great pleasure. Driving along, she could see her lean face in the windshield. She couldn't help but think that she had no double chin, and her pride rode in her, a lean thing. She saw herself erect, a little caustic and severe, and the neat turn-over collar of her little blue suit. Her real lone self. This was what she wanted. Nothing messy. She had got herself up in the world. This was the first summer she had not taken a summer course, and she felt a little guilty; but she had had a good summer just being lazy, and now she was going to San Francisco to see her sister and would come back two days before school opened. She had thought in the spring that her skin was getting that papyrus look so many teachers had, and she had a little tired droop to her shoulders and was a little bit too thin. It was fine to be thin but not too thin. Now she looked better, brown, and she had got the habit of a little eye shadow, a little dry rouge, and just a touch of lipstick. It was really becoming.

Yes, everything was ideal.

But before long she was sorry she had come through the Tehachapi Mountains. Why hadn't someone told her they were like that? They did her in. Frightening. Mile after mile in the intense September heat, through fierce mountains of sand, and bare gleaming rock faces jutting sheer from the road. Her eyes burned, her throat was parched, and there was mile after mile of lonely road without a service station and not a soul passing. She wished, after all, that Miss Robbins had come with her. It would have been nice to be able to say, "What an interesting formation, Miss Robbins! We really should make sketches of it, so we could look up the geological facts when we get back." Everything would have seemed normal then.

She drove slowly through the hot yellow swells, around the firm curves; and the yellow light shone far off in the tawny valleys, where black mares, delicate haunched, grazed, flesh shining as the sun struck off them. The sun beat down like a golden body about to take form on the road ahead of her. She drove very slowly, and something began to loosen in her, and her eyes seemed to dilate and darken as she looked into the fold upon fold of earth flesh lying clear to the horizon. She saw she was not making what is called "good time." In fact, she was making very bad time.

She had been driving five hours. She looked at her wrist watch and decided she would stop, even if it was only eleven-thirty, and have lunch. So when she saw a little service station far down, tucked into the great folds of dun hill, she was glad. Her car crept closer circling out of sight of it and then circling back until her aching eyes could read the sign—Half Way Station—and she drew up to the side and stopped. Her skin felt as if it were shrivelling on her bone. She saw a man—or was it a boy?—with a pack, standing by the gas pump probably waiting to catch a ride; she wouldn't pick him up, that was certain. These hills were certainly forsaken.

She went in at the door marked Ladies. The tiny cubicle comforted her. She opened her vanity case and took out some tissue, made little pads and put them over her eyes. But still all she could see was those terrifying great mounds of the earth and the sun thrusting down like arrows. What a ghastly country! Why hadn't someone told her? It was barbarous of the automobile club to let her come through this country. She couldn't think of one tribe of Indians.

She really felt a kind of fright and stayed there a long time, and then she got a fright for fear she had left her keys in the car and with that boy out there—she could see his sharp piercing glance out of his brown face—and she had to go pouncing all through her bag, and at last she found them, of all places, in her coin purse and she always put them into the breast pocket of her suit. She did think people were nuisances who had to go looking in all their pockets for keys. Habit was an excellent thing and saved nobody knew how much time.

But at last she drew a deep breath, opened the door onto the vast terrible bright needles of light, and there she saw through the heavy down pouring curtain the boy still standing there exactly as he had been standing before, half leaning, looking from under his black brows. He looked like a dark stroke in the terrible light, and he seemed to be still looking at her. She fumbled the collar at her throat, brushed off the front of her skirt, and went into the lunch room.

"My, it's certainly hot," she said to the thin man behind the counter. She felt strange hearing her voice issue from her.

"It is," said the proprietor, "but a little cooler in here." He was a thin shrewd man.

She sat down in the booth. "Yes," she said, and saw that the boy had followed her in and sat down on the stool at the lunch counter, but he seemed to still be looking at her. He looked as if he had been roasted, slowly turned on a spit until he seemed glowing, like phosphorus, as if the sun were in him, and his black eyes were a little bloodshot as if the whites had been burned, and his broad chest fell down easily to his hips as he ground out a cigarette with his heel. The thin man brought her a glass of water. "What will you have, ma'am?" he said with respect. "I'll have a lettuce sandwich," she said. "I'm afraid we ain't got any proper lettuce ma'am," he said bowing a little. "We can't get it fresh out here. We have peanut butter, sliced tongue—" "All right," she said quickly, "peanut butter and, well, a glass of beer." She felt that the boy was somehow laughing at her. She felt angry.

"This the first time you been in these parts?" called out the thin man from behind the counter. "Yes," she said, and her own voice sounded small to her. "It is." The boy at the counter turned his head, still with it lowered, so that his eyes looked up at her even though she was sitting down in the booth, and a soft charge went through her, frightening. She felt herself bridling, and she said in a loud cool voice: "This is a very interesting country. Do you know anything about the formation of these curious rocks that jut out of the hills?—they are so bare and then suddenly this rock—"

Was she imagining it only, that the boy seemed to smile and shifted his weight?

"No'm," said the thin man, drawing the beer, "I can't say I ever thought about it." She felt as if something passed between the two men, and it made her angry, as if they were subtly laughing at her. "I know it's hard to grow anything here, unless you got a deep well," he said.

"Oh, I can imagine," she sang out too loud; she felt her voice ringing like metal. The boy seemed not to be touched by what she was saying, but he attended curiously to every word, standing silent but alert like a horse standing at a fence waiting for something. So she began to tell the lunch room proprietor the history of the country, and he seemed amazed but not impressed. It made her feel vindicated somehow. Still the boy drooped alert on the stool, his half face turned towards her, his huge burned ear springing from his head. She stayed half an hour and so cut her time still further, but she felt much better and thought she would make up for it. She got up and paid her bill. "I'll send you a book about the Indians," she said to the thin man.

He smiled, "That will be very nice," he said. "Thank you, I'm sure," and the two men looked at each other again, and she was amazed at the anger that gushed like a sudden fountain in her breast. She sailed out and got into the car. The thin man came after her. "Oh, by the way," he said, "the lad in there has had an awful time this morning catching a ride. He's got to get up to the bridge, about fifty miles." She felt they were putting something over on her. "I'll vouch for him," the thin man said. "He lives here, and I know his folks now for eighteen years. He's been to the harvest fields, and it would be something for him to ride with an educated lady like you," he added cunningly. The boy came out and was smiling at her now very eagerly. "Now they want something," she thought, and she was suddenly amazed to find out that she despised men and always had.

"I don't like to drive with a strange man," she said, stubborn.

"Oh, this boy is harmless," the thin man said, and that look passed between the two of them again. "I can vouch for him—good as gold his family is. I thought maybe anyhow you might give him a mite of education on the way." A pure glint of malice came into the thin man's eyes that frightened her. He hates me, too, she thought. Men like that hate women with brains.

"All right," she said, "get in."

"Get right in there," the thin man said. "It's only a piece."

The boy rose towards her, and she drew away, and he sat down in a great odor of milk and hay, right beside her, stifling. Without speaking she threw the car in, and they plunged up the bald brow of the hill and began to climb slowly. The sun was in the central sky, and the heat fell vertically. She wouldn't look at him and wished she could get out her handkerchief—such a nauseating odor of sweat and something like buttermilk. She couldn't help but be conscious of the side of his overall leg beside her and his big shoes, and she felt he never took his eyes off her, like some awful bird—and that curious little smile on his mouth as if he knew something about her that she didn't know herself. She knew without looking that he was bending his head towards her with that curious awful little glimmer of a smile.

He said in a soft cajoling voice, "It's pretty hot, and it's nice of you to take me. I had a hard time."

It disarmed her. She felt sorry for him, wanting to be helpful. She always wanted to help men, do something for them, and then really underneath she could hate them. "Oh," she said, "that was all right. You know one hates to pick up just anyone."

"Sure enough," he said. "I heard in Colorado a fellow got killed."

"Yes," she said, but she was on her guard. His words seemed to mean nothing to him. He was like the heat, in a drowse. "My, you must have been in the sun," she said.

"Yes," he said, "I've been as far as Kansas—looking for work."

"The conditions are pretty bad," she said.

"There ain't no work," he said simply.

"Oh," she said, "that's too bad," and felt awkward and inane. He seemed in such a sun-warmed ease, his legs stretching down. He had his coat in his arms and his shirtsleeves were torn off, showing his huge roasted arms. She could see the huge turn of the muscles of his arms, out of the corner of her eye.

They went climbing in gear up that naked mountain, and it began to affect her curiously. The earth seemed to turn on the bone rich and shining, the great mounds burning in the sun, the great golden body, hard and robust, and the sun striking hot and dazzling.

"These mountains," she began to tell him, "are thousands of years old."

"Yeah," he said looking at her sharply, "I'll bet." He lounged down beside her. "I'm sleepy," he said. "I slept on a bench in L. A. las' night."

She felt he was moving slowly towards her as if about to touch her leg. She sat as far over as she could, but she felt him looking at her, taking something for granted.

"Yes," she said, "it would be an interesting study, these mountains."

He didn't answer and threw her into confusion. He lounged down, looking up at her. She drew her skirt sharply down over her leg. Something became very alert in her, and she could tell what he was doing without looking at him.

They didn't stop again. The country looked the same every minute. They rose on that vast naked curve into the blue blue sky, and dropped into the crevasse and rose again on the same curve. Lines and angles, and bare earth curves, tawny and rolling in the heat. She thought she was going a little mad and longed to see a tree or a house.

"I could go on to San Francisco with you," he said and she could feel her heart suddenly in her.

"Why would you do that?" she said drawing away, one hand at her throat.

"Why shouldn't I?" he said insolently. "It would be kind of nice for both of us," he was smiling that insolent knowing smile. She didn't know how to answer. If she took him seriously it would implicate her, and if she didn't it might also. "It would be kind of nice now, wouldn't it?" he said again with his curious soft impudence. "Wouldn't it?"

"Why, of course, I'm going to San Francisco anyway," she said evasively.

"Oh sure," he said, "I know that. But it isn't so hot going alone. And we get along, don't we?" He didn't move, but his voice drove into her.

"Why, I don't know," she said coldly, "I'm only taking you to the bridge."

He gave a little grunt and put his cap on his head, pulling the beak over his eyes which only concentrated his awful power. She pulled her blouse up over her shoulders. She had never noticed before that it fell so low in front. She felt terribly. And to her horror he went on talking to her softly.

"You wouldn't kid me, would you? You know I like you, I like you. You're pretty."

She couldn't say a word. She felt her throat beating. He was making love to her just as if she was any common slut. She felt her throat beating and swelling.

He kept on his soft drowsy talk, "The times is sure hard." His words seemed to be very tiny falling from the enormous glow of his presence, wonderful, as if he had been turned naked, roasted in the sun. You could smell his sunburnt flesh. And you could smell the earth turning on its spit under the mighty sun. If only he were not so near; the car threw them close together, and she tried to go easy around the curves so that his big body would not lounge down upon her like a mountain. She couldn't remember when she had been so close to a man. It was as frightening as some great earth cataclysm. She prided herself on knowing men. She was their equal in every way, she knew that.

If only she could see something familiar, then she could get back her normal feelings about men. She felt as if she were in a nightmare.

"I worked when I was twenty," he went on softly. "Made good money, blew it in on Saturday night. Made big money when I was twenty—Jesus, I've got something to look forward to, haven't I."

She sat over as far as she could. "Where did you work?" she managed to say. She prided herself on always getting information about people. They talked about Roosevelt and the New Deal. She always had strong views, but for the first time in her life she felt as if what she was saying was no good, like talking when some gigantic happening is silently going on. She didn't know what was happening, but she felt that every moment he won, was slowly overcoming her, and that her talk gave him a chance silently to overcome her. She was frightened as if they were about to crack up in a fearful accident. She relaxed on the seat, and the heat stroked down her body. She wished she wasn't driving a car. The great body of the earth seemed to touch her, and she began looking where the shadows were beginning to stroke down the sides of the mounds as if she might sleep there for a little while. An awful desire to sleep drugged her, as if she hadn't slept for years and years. She felt warm and furred and dangerously drugged.

It was as if a little rocket exploded in front of her face when he said, "Let's don't talk about that," and he leaned closer than he had. "Let's talk about you." She could see suddenly his whole face thrust to her, the gleaming strong teeth, the roasted young cheeks, and he had long single whiskers growing out like a mandarin. She laughed a little. "Who do you think I am?" she asked nervously. "Why, I guess you're a pretty good-looking girl," he said. "You look pretty good to me." She bridled at this common language, as if she were nothing but any girl you pick up anywhere.

"Why, I'm a school teacher," she cried.

He didn't seem surprised. "O.K.," he said, laughing into her face.

"Why, I could almost be your mother," she cried.

"Aw, that's a new one," he said, and he put his great hand straight on her arm. "Never heard of a girl wanting to make out she was old before."

She had an awful desire to make him say more; she was frightened. Swift thoughts, habitual thoughts, came into her head, and they seemed like frail things that the heat pounded down. Was it because they were so far out in these strange, rising, mounded hills?

"Are those cigarettes?" he said pointing to the pocket beside her. "Let's stop and have a smoke."

"Oh no," she cried, "I haven't time. I'm behind now. I've got to make up a lot of time."

"O.K.," he said. "We can smoke here."

"All right," she said, handing him the package. "You keep the package."

"All right," he said and took one out and put the package into his pocket.

The sun moved to her side and fell on her shoulder and breast and arm. It was as if all her blood sprang warm out of her. The sun moved slowly and fell along her whole side.

"Oh," he said, "I know you like me."

"How do you know?" she said offended, trying to see the road. She felt fatuous indulging in this adolescent conversation. She let her skirt slip up a little. She knew she had good legs, tapering down swiftly to her ankles. But he didn't seem actually to be looking at her; a heat came out of his great lax body and enveloped her. He seemed warmly to include her, close to himself.

"What kind of a wheel is that?" he said and put his large thick hand beside her own small one on the wheel. "Oh, it turns easy," he said. "I haven't driven a car since I left home. A good car is a pretty sweet thing," he said, and leaned over and began to fondle the gadgets on the front, and she looked fascinated at his huge wrist joint covered with golden hair bleached in the sun. She had to look and saw that his hair was black on his skull but also burnt around the edges. Looking at him she met his gaze and felt her face flush.

They fell down the valley, yellow as a dream. The hills lifted themselves out on the edge of the light. The great animal flesh jointed mountains wrought a craving in her. There was not a tree, not a growth, just the bare swelling rondures of the mountains, the yellow hot swells, as if they were lifting and being driven through an ossified torrent.

The Tehachapis rolled before them, with only their sharp primeval glint, warm and fierce. They didn't say anything about that in the books. She felt suddenly as if she had missed everything. She should say something more to her classes. Suppose she should say—"The Tehachapi Mountains have warmed and bloomed for a thousand years." After all, why not? This was the true information.

She stopped the car. She turned and looked directly at him. "What is your name?" she asked.

Puzzled, he leaned towards her, that tender warm glint on his face. "Thom Beason," he said. The hot light seemed to fall around them like rain.

"Listen," he said gripping her hands, twisting them a little, "let's get out. Wouldn't it be swell to lie down over there in the hills. Look there's a shadow just over there. It's cool in those shadows if you dig down a little—"

She saw his wrists, his giant breast, his knees, and behind him the tawny form and heat of the great earth woman, basking yellow and plump in the sun, her cliffs, her joints gleaming yellow rock, her ribs, her sides warm and full. The rocks that skirted the road glistened like bone, a sheer precipice and dazzle of rock, frightening and splendid, like the sheer precipice of his breast looming towards her so that she could feel the heat come from him and envelop her like fire, and she felt she was falling swiftly down the sides of him, and for the first time in her life she felt the sheer sides of her own body dropping swift and fleet down to her dreaming feet, and an ache, like lightning piercing stone, struck into her between the breasts.

She let her head fall over their hands and pulled back from him in hard resistance. She could not go to his breast that welcomed her—All my delicacy, my purity, she thought. He will not see me. I must not change. I must not change. The tears came to her eyes, and at the same time a canker of self-loathing, terrible, festered in her.

The moment had passed. He withdrew from her. "O.K.," he said. "You don't need to be scared. Only if you wanted to. O.K. Let's go. You can make up your time. We're only about a half hour from the bridge where I blow."

She began driving very fast, very well. He withdrew completely from her, just waiting to get out. It hurt her, as if there had been before her some sumptuous feast she had been unable to partake of, the lush passional day, the wheaty boy, some wonderful, wonderful fruit.

"I'll swan," he said. "There's old Magill going with a load of melons. Hi!" he shouted.

She wished he was gone already. She wildly began thinking what she could say to him. She thought she would say, casually—"Well, good luck." She felt easier knowing what she was going to say. She stopped the car. He got out and stood by the car. She wanted to do something for him. She really would have liked to give him something. She thought she would buy him a melon. "How much are they?" she said nodding towards the melons and hunting for her pocketbook. He ran over. "You pick out a good one," she called after him.

He came back with a large one with yellow crevasses. His strong talons curved around it, and he kept pressing it, leaving a dent which swelled out after his fingers. He held up the great melon with its half-moon partitions, grading golden towards the sun. She fumbled with her purse to pay for it, and suddenly she saw that he was holding it towards her, that he was giving it to her, and she was ashamed and held the quarter she had taken out, in her hand. He was smiling at her as if he felt sad for her. She smiled foolishly and sat pressing her wet hands together.

"Well, good-bye," he said. "And good luck."

"Good-bye," she said. Now she could not say good luck. He had beat her to it. Why should he wish her good luck when she had it? . . .

He turned and ran towards the wagon, climbed in and did not look back. She drove around the curve, stopped, turned down the mirror and looked at her face. She felt like a stick and looked like a witch. Now she was safe—safe. She would never never change, pure and inviolate forever; and she began to cry.

After five minutes she saw a car rounding the mountain to her right. It would pass her soon. She got out her whiskbroom, brushed her suit, brushed off the seat where he had sat, opened the back window to air out the smell of buttermilk and hay, started the car and drove to San Francisco because that was where she was going.

NOTE ON SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S

"OUT OF NOWHERE INTO NOTHING"

Rosalind Wescott has left her home in a small Iowa town for Chicago, where she is employed in an office. The office manager, Walter Sayers, is of romantic temperament and unfit for business; and he is tied to an unhappy marriage. Rosalind and Sayers become intimate, but she decides to return home and redirect her life. Next door to the Wescott home lives Melville Stoner, a bachelor, who has been interested in her. Our selection begins when she has returned to the Iowa town from which she came.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

Out of Nowhere into Nothing

An Ohioan by birth, Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) wrote some twenty-two volumes and a large miscellany, but his *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) probably remains his most famous work: it marked a milestone in American self-discovery. Anderson succeeded in business but detested it, for he saw the degrading aspects of industrialism, notably in the American small town, with its passions stifled and its stirrings of the mind distorted. His indictments are lyrical: they embody a search. Unlike so many antiphilistines, he was not satisfied with the easy solutions by way of culture and taste. Anderson's characters, who burn to escape their environment, nevertheless are able to view it as though they were not involved. And they rush out of it, not toward solutions, but into grander dilemmas. Through skilful evocative selection, Anderson conjures up the darkness of youth, its softness, and its obvious sentimentality. Some critics belabor him for failing to arrive at logical conclusions; but for him, these were less important than the intimate understanding of rebellion.

SHE lay on her back, at her mother's feet, on the porch of the Wescott house trying to think, striving to get her own impulses clear in her mind. She had just told her mother that she wanted to give herself to the man, Walter Sayers. Having made the statement she already wondered if it could be quite true. She was a woman and her mother was a woman. What would her mother have to say to her? What did mothers say to daughters? The male element in life—what did it want? Her own desires and impulses were not clearly realized within herself. Perhaps what she wanted in life could be got in some sort of communion with another woman, with her mother. What a strange and beautiful thing it would be if mothers could suddenly begin to sing to their daughters, if out of the darkness and silence of old women song could come.

Men confused Rosalind, they had always confused her. On that very evening her father for the first time in years had really looked at her. He had stopped before her as she sat on the porch and there had been something in his eyes. A fire had burned in his old eyes as it had sometimes burned in the eyes of Walter. Was the fire intended to consume her quite? Was it the fate of women to be consumed by men and of men to be consumed by women?

In the orchard, an hour before she had distinctly felt the two men, Melville Stoner and Walter Sayers coming toward her, walking silently on the soft carpet made of the dark shadows of trees.

They were again coming toward her. In their thoughts they approached nearer and nearer to her, to the inner truth of her. The street and the town of Willow Springs were covered with a mantle of silence. Was it the silence of death? Had her mother died? Did her mother sit there now a dead thing in the chair beside her?

The soft creaking of the rocking chair went on and on. Of the two men whose spirits seemed hovering about one, Melville Stoner, was bold and cunning. He was too close to her, knew too much of her. He was unafraid. The spirit of Walter Sayers was merciful. He was gentle, a man of understanding. She grew afraid of Melville Stoner. He was too close to her, knew too much of the dark, stupid side of her life. She turned on her side and stared into the darkness toward the Stoner house remembering her girlhood. The man was too physically close. The faint light from the distant street lamp that had lighted her mother's face crept between branches of trees and over the tops of bushes and she could see dimly the figure of Melville Stoner sitting before his house. She wished it were possible with a thought to destroy him, wipe him out, cause him to cease to exist. He was waiting. When her mother had gone to bed and when she had gone upstairs to her own room to lie awake he would invade her privacy. Her father would come home, walking with dragging footsteps along the sidewalk. He would come into the Wescott house and through to the back door. He would pump the pail of water at the pump and bring it into the house to put it on the box by the kitchen sink. Then he would wind the clock. He would—

Rosalind stirred uneasily. Life in the figure of Melville Stoner had her, it gripped her tightly. She could not escape. He would come into her bedroom and invade her secret thoughts. There was no escape for her. She imagined his mocking laughter ringing through the silent house, the sound rising above the dreadful commonplace sounds of everyday life there. She did not want that to happen. The sudden death of Melville Stoner would bring sweet silence. She wished it possible with a thought to destroy him, to destroy all men. She wanted her mother to draw close to her. That would save her from the men. Surely, before the evening had passed her mother would have something to say, something living and true.

Rosalind forced the figure of Melville Stoner out of her mind. It was as though she had got out of her bed in the room upstairs and had taken the man by the arm to lead him to the door. She had put him out of the room and had closed the door.

Her mind played her a trick. Melville Stoner had no sooner gone out of her mind than Walter Sayers came in. In imagination she was with Walter in the car on the summer evening in the pasture and he was singing. The cattle with their soft broad noses and the sweet grass-flavored breaths were crowding in close.

There was sweetness in Rosalind's thoughts now. She rested and waited, waited for her mother to speak. In her presence Walter Sayers had broken his long silence and soon the old silence between mother and daughter would also be broken.

The singer who would not sing had begun to sing because of her presence. Song was the true note of life, it was the triumph of life over death.

What sweet solace had come to her that time when Walter Sayers sang! How life had coursed through her body! How alive she had suddenly become! It was at that moment she had decided definitely, finally, that she wanted to come closer to the man, that she wanted with him the ultimate physical closeness—to find in physical expression through him what in his song he was finding through her.

It was in expressing physically her love of the man she would find the white wonder of life, the wonder of which, as a clumsy and crude girl, she had dreamed as she lay on the grass in the orchard. Through the body of the singer she would approach, touch the white wonder of life. "I shall willingly sacrifice everything else on the chance that may happen," she thought.

How peaceful and quiet the summer night had become! How clearly now she understood life! The song Walter Sayers had sung in the field, in the presence of the cattle was in a tongue she had not understood, but now she understood everything, even the meaning of the strange foreign words.

The song was about life and death. What else was there to sing about? The sudden knowledge of the content of the song had not come out of her own mind. The spirit of Walter was coming toward her. It had pushed the mocking spirit of Melville Stoner aside. What things had not the mind of Walter Sayers already done to her mind, to the awakening woman within her. Now it was telling her the story of the song. The words of the song itself seemed to float down the silent street of the Iowa town. They described the sun going down in the smoke clouds of a city and the gulls coming from a lake to float over the city.

Now the gulls floated over a river. The river was the color of chrysoprase. She, Rosalind Wescott, stood on a bridge in the heart of the city and she had become entirely convinced of the filth and ugliness of life. She was about to throw herself into the river, to destroy herself in an effort to make herself clean.

It did not matter. Strange sharp cries came from the birds. The cries of the birds were like the voice of Melville Stoner. They whirled and turned in the air overhead. In a moment more she would throw herself into the river and then the birds would fall straight down in a long graceful line. The body of her would be gone, swept away by the stream, carried away to decay but what was really alive in herself would arise with the birds, in the long graceful upward line of the flight of the birds.

Rosalind lay tense and still on the porch at her mother's feet. In the air above the hot sleeping town, buried deep in the ground beneath all towns and cities, life went on singing, it persistently sang. The song of life was in the humming of bees, in the calling of tree toads, in the throats of negroes rolling cotton bales on a boat in a river.

The song was a command. It told over and over the story of life and of death, life forever defeated by death, death forever defeated by life.

* * * * * * *

The long silence of Rosalind's mother was broken and Rosalind tried to tear herself away from the spirit of the song that had begun to sing itself within her—

The sun sank down into the western sky over a city—
  Life defeated by death,
  Death defeated by life.
The factory chimneys had become pencils of light—
  Life defeated by death,
  Death defeated by life.

The rocking chair in which Rosalind's mother sat kept creaking. Words came haltingly from between her white lips. The test of Ma Wescott's life had come. Always she had been defeated. Now she must triumph in the person of Rosalind, the daughter who had come out of her body. To her she must make clear the fate of all women. Young girls grew up dreaming, hoping, believing. There was a conspiracy. Men made words, they wrote books and sang songs about a thing called love. Young girls believed. They married or entered into close relationships with men without marriage. On the marriage night there was a brutal assault and after that the woman had to try to save herself as best as she could. She withdrew within herself, further and further within herself. Ma Wescott had stayed all her life hidden away within her own house, in the kitchen of her house. As the years passed and after the children came her man had demanded less and less of her. Now this new trouble had come. Her daughter was to have the same experience, to go through the experience that had spoiled life for her.

How proud she had been of Rosalind, going out into the world, making her own way. Her daughter dressed with a certain air, walked with a certain air. She was a proud, upstanding, triumphant thing. She did not need a man.

"God, Rosalind, don't do it, don't do it," she muttered over and over.

How much she had wanted Rosalind to keep clear and clean! Once she also had been a young woman, proud, upstanding. Could anyone think she had ever wanted to become Ma Wescott, fat, heavy and old? All through her married life she had stayed in her own house, in the kitchen of her own house, but in her own way she had watched, she had seen how things went with women. Her man had known how to make money, he had always housed her comfortably. He was a slow, silent man but in his own way he was as good as any of the men of Willow Springs. Men worked for money, they ate heavily and then at night they came home to the woman they had married.

Before she married, Ma Wescott had been a farmer's daughter. She had seen things among the beasts, how the male pursued the female. There was a certain hard insistence, cruelty. Life perpetuated itself that way. The time of her own marriage was a dim, terrible time. Why had she wanted to marry? She tried to tell Rosalind about it. "I saw him on the Main Street of town here, one Saturday evening when I had come to town with father, and two weeks after that I met him again at a dance out in the country," she said. She spoke like one who has been running a long distance and who has some important, some immediate message to deliver. "He wanted me to marry him and I did it. He wanted me to marry him and I did it."

She could not get beyond the fact of her marriage. Did her daughter think she had no vital thing to say concerning the relationship of men and women? All through her married life she had stayed in her husband's house, working as a beast might work, washing dirty clothes, dirty dishes, cooking food.

She had been thinking, all through the years she had been thinking. There was a dreadful lie in life, the whole fact of life was a lie.

She had thought it all out. There was a world somewhere unlike the world in which she lived. It was a heavenly place in which there was no marrying or giving in marriage, a sexless quiet windless place where mankind lived in a state of bliss. For some unknown reason mankind had been thrown out of that place, had been thrown down upon the earth. It was a punishment for an unforgivable sin, the sin of sex.

The sin had been in her as well as in the man she had married. She had wanted to marry. Why else did she do it? Men and women were condemned to commit the sin that destroyed them. Except for a few rare sacred beings no man or woman escaped.

What thinking she had done! When she had just married and after her man had taken what he wanted of her he slept heavily but she did not sleep. She crept out of bed and going to a window looked at the stars. The stars were quiet. With what a slow stately tread the moon moved across the sky. The stars did not sin. They did not touch one another. Each star was a thing apart from all other stars, a sacred inviolate thing. On the earth, under the stars everything was corrupt, the trees, flowers, grasses, the beasts of the field, men and women. They were all corrupt. They lived for a moment and then fell into decay. She herself was falling into decay. Life was a lie. Life perpetuated itself by the lie called love. The truth was that life itself came out of sin, perpetuated itself only by sin.

"There is no such thing as love. The word is a lie. The man you are telling me about wants you for the purpose of sin," she said and getting heavily up went into the house.

Rosalind heard her moving about in the darkness. She came to the screen door and stood looking at her daughter lying tense and waiting on the porch. The passion of denial was so strong in her that she felt choked. To the daughter it seemed that her mother standing in the darkness behind her had become a great spider, striving to lead her down into some web of darkness. "Men only hurt women," she said, "they can't help wanting to hurt women. They are made that way. The thing they call love doesn't exist. It's a lie."

"Life is dirty. Letting a man touch her dirties a woman." Ma Wescott fairly screamed forth the words. They seemed torn from her, from some deep inner part of her being. Having said them she moved off into the darkness and Rosalind heard her going slowly toward the stairway that led to the bedroom above. She was weeping in the peculiar half choked way in which old fat women weep. The heavy feet that had begun to mount the stair stopped and there was silence. Ma Wescott had said nothing of what was in her mind. She had thought it all out, what she wanted to say to her daughter. Why would the words not come? The passion for denial within her was not satisfied. "There is no love. Life is a lie. It leads to sin, to death and decay," she called into the darkness.

A strange, almost uncanny thing happened to Rosalind. The figure of her mother went out of her mind and she was in fancy again a young girl and had gone with other young girls to visit a friend about to be married. With the others she stood in a room where white dresses lay on a bed. One of her companions, a thin, flat breasted girl fell on her knees beside the bed. A cry arose. Did it come from the girl or from the old tired defeated woman within the Wescott house? "Don't do it. O, Rosalind don't do it," pleaded a voice broken with sobs.

The Wescott house had become silent like the street outside and like the sky sprinkled with stars into which Rosalind gazed. The tenseness within her relaxed and she tried again to think. There was a thing that balanced, that swung backward and forward. Was it merely her heart beating? Her mind cleared.

The song that had come from the lips of Walter Sayers was still singing within her—

> Life the conqueror over death,
> Death the conqueror over life.

She sat up and put her head into her hands. "I came here to Willow Springs to put myself to a test. Is it the test of life and death?" she asked herself. Her mother had gone up the stairway, into the darkness of the bedroom above.

The song singing within Rosalind went on—

> Life the conqueror over death,
> Death the conqueror over life.

Was the song a male thing, the call of the male to the female, a lie, as her mother had said? It did not sound like a lie. The song had come from the lips of the man Walter and she had left him and had come to her mother. Then Melville Stoner, another male, had come to her. In him also was singing the song of life and death. When the song stopped singing within one did death come? Was death but denial? The song was singing within herself. What a confusion!

After her last outcry Ma Wescott had gone weeping up the stairs and to her own room and to bed. After a time Rosalind followed. She threw herself onto her own bed without undressing. Both women lay waiting. Outside in the darkness before his house sat Melville Stoner, the male, the man who knew of all that had passed between mother and daughter. Rosalind thought of the bridge over the river near the factory in the city and of the gulls floating in the air high above the river. She wished herself there, standing on the bridge. "It would be sweet now to throw my body down into the river," she thought. She imagined herself falling swiftly and the swifter fall of the birds down out of the sky. They were swooping down to pick up the life she was ready to drop, sweeping swiftly and beautifully down. That was what the song Walter had sung was about.

Henry Wescott came home from his evening at Emanuel Wilson's store. He went heavily through the house to the back door and the pump. There was the slow creaking sound of the pump working and then he came into the house and put the pail of water on the box by the kitchen sink. A little of the water spilled. There was a soft little slap—like a child's bare feet striking the floor—

Rosalind arose. The dead cold weariness that had settled down upon her went away. Cold dead hands had been gripping her. Now they were swept aside. Her bag was in a closet but she had forgotten it. Quickly she took off her shoes and holding them in her hands went out into the hall in her stockinged feet. Her father came heavily up the stairs past her as she stood breathless with her body pressed against the wall in the hallway.

How quick and alert her mind had become! There was a train Eastward bound toward Chicago that passed through Willow Springs at two in the morning. She would not wait for it. She would walk the eight miles to the next town to the east. That would get her out of town. It would give her something to do. "I need to be moving now," she thought as she ran down the stairs and went silently out of the house.

She walked on the grass beside the sidewalk to the gate before Melville Stoner's house and he came down to the gate to meet her. He laughed mockingly. "I fancied I might have another chance to walk with you before the night was gone," he said bowing. Rosalind did not know how much of the conversation between herself and her mother he had heard. It did not matter. He knew all Ma Wescott had said, all she could say and all Rosalind could say or understand. The thought was infinitely sweet to Rosalind. It was Melville Stoner who lifted the town of Willow Springs up out of the shadow of death. Words were unnecessary. With him she had established the thing beyond words, beyond passion—the fellowship in living, the fellowship in life.

They walked in silence to the town's edge and then Melville Stoner put out his hand. "You'll come with me?" she asked, but he shook his head and laughed. "No," he said, "I'll stay here. My time for going passed long ago. I'll stay here until I die. I'll stay here with my thoughts."

He turned and walked away into the darkness beyond the round circle of light cast by the last street lamp on the street that now became a country road leading to the next town to the east. Rosalind stood to watch him go and something in his long loping gait again suggested to her mind the figure of a gigantic bird. "He is like the gulls that float above the river in Chicago," she thought. "His spirit floats above the town of Willow Springs. When the death in life comes to the people here he swoops down, with his mind, plucking out the beauty of them."

She walked at first slowly along the road between corn fields. The night was a vast quiet place into which she could walk in peace. A little breeze rustled the corn blades but there were no dreadful significant human sounds, the sounds made by those who lived physically but who in spirit were dead, had accepted death, believed only in death. The corn blades rubbed against each other and there was a low sweet sound as though something was being born, old dead physical life was being torn away, cast aside. Perhaps new life was coming into the land.

Rosalind began to run. She had thrown off the town and her father and mother as a runner might throw off a heavy and unnecessary garment. She wished also to throw off the garments that stood between her body and nudity. She wanted to be naked, new born. Two miles out of town a bridge crossed Willow Creek. It was now empty and dry but in the darkness she imagined it filled with water, swift running water, water the color of chrysoprase. She had been running swiftly and now she stopped and stood on the bridge, her breath coming in quick little gasps.

After a time she went on again, walking until she had regained her breath and then running again. Her body tingled with life. She did not ask herself what she was going to do, how she was to meet the problem she had come to Willow Springs half hoping to have solved by a word from her mother. She ran. Before her eyes the dusty road kept coming up to her out of darkness. She ran forward, always forward into a faint streak of light. The darkness unfolded before her. There was joy in the running and with every step she took she achieved a new sense of escape. A delicious notion came into her mind. As she ran she thought the light under her feet became more distinct. It was, she thought, as though the darkness had grown afraid in her presence and sprang aside, out of her path. There was a sensation of boldness. She had herself become something that within itself contained light. She was a creator of light. At her approach darkness grew afraid and fled away into the distance. When that thought came she found herself able to run without stopping to rest and half wished she might run on forever, through the land, through towns and cities, driving darkness away with her presence.

NOTE ON W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S "OF HUMAN BONDAGE"

Philip Carey, of moderately well-to-do origin, attempts many studies and arts until he fixes upon medicine as a career. He has lived in Heidelberg and Paris and in the latter city he observed the fate of a girl friend, who committed suicide because she had failed in art.

Naturally compassionate, lacking self-confidence, and timid because of his club-foot, Philip becomes enslaved by a girl, Mildred, who is dominated by capricious resolution. She is a tea-shop waitress. She is also the casual mistress of a German, Emil. For years, while Philip struggles with his medical studies, she cunningly humiliates him, flaunts her affections for Emil and for Philip's friend Griffiths; and yet holds Philip firmly in a vise. Norah, one of Philip's girl friends, is ideally suited to be his companion and wife, but Mildred is the magnet.

Mildred gives birth to Emil's baby. Later she contracts a wasting disease. But her wretched affair with Philip persists, through a host of ups and downs; while Philip very gradually begins to achieve manhood and deeper understanding.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Of Human Bondage

Born in England in 1874 and educated at Heidelberg, W. Somerset Maugham entered professional writing at twenty-three. He has become one of the most celebrated novelists and dramatists, the idol of those writers who envy efficiency —he is supercilious about writing that is not aimed frankly at the market. For him the "little theatre," exotic poetry, experimental writing, and the like are futilities: the test of a man of letters is largely in financial reward. He essays the exotic—Britons in China and the South Seas; views on El Creco and Gauguin, artists whose worlds in no ways correspond with his own. But the old Adam broke through in his renowned work *Of Human Bondage* (1915), not at first successful—long, tragic, and in many ways the contrary of his present writing. Mildred, the supreme creation of this book, a cockney waitress, wanton, to men unpredictable, underfed, cringing to vulgar power, a weak, wretched woman, seizes empire over gentle deformed Philip Carey, a medical student. Our selection begins when her grip on him is weakening.

THE climax came two or three weeks later. Mildred was driven by Philip's behaviour to a pitch of strange exasperation. There were many different emotions in her soul, and she passed from mood to mood with facility. She spent a great deal of time alone and brooded over her position. She did not put all her feelings into words, she did not even know what they were, but certain things stood out in her mind, and she thought of them over and over again. She had never understood Philip, nor had very much liked him; but she was pleased to have him about her because she thought he was a gentleman. She was impressed because his father had been a doctor and his uncle was a clergyman. She despised him a little because she had made such a fool of him, and at the same time was never quite comfortable in his presence; she could not let herself go, and she felt that he was criticising her manners.

When she first came to live in the little rooms in Kennington she was tired out and ashamed. She was glad to be left alone. It was a comfort to think that there was no rent to pay; she need not go out in all weathers, and she could lie quietly in bed if she did not feel well. She had hated the life she led. It was horrible to have to be affable and subservient; and even now when it crossed her mind she cried with pity for herself as she thought of the roughness of men and their brutal language. But it crossed her mind very seldom. She was grateful to Philip for coming to her rescue, and when she remembered how honestly he had loved her and how badly she had treated him, she felt a pang of remorse. It was easy to make it up to him. It meant very little to her. She was surprised when he refused her suggestion, but she shrugged her shoulders: let him put on airs if he liked, she did not care, he would be anxious enough in a little while, and then it would be her turn to refuse; if he thought it was any deprivation to her he was very much mistaken. She had no doubt of her power over him. He was peculiar, but she knew him through and through. He had so often quarrelled with her and sworn he would never see her again, and then in a little while he had come on his knees begging to be forgiven. It gave her a thrill to think how he had cringed before her. He would have been glad to lie down on the ground for her to walk on him. She had seen him cry. She knew exactly how to treat him, pay no attention to him, just pretend you didn't notice his tempers, leave him severely alone, and in a little while he was sure to grovel. She laughed a little to herself, good-humouredly, when she thought how he had come and eaten dirt before her. She had had her fling now. She knew what men were and did not want to have anything more to do with them. She was quite ready to settle down with Philip. When all was said, he was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and that was something not to be sneezed at, wasn't it? Anyhow she was in no hurry, and she was not going to take the first step. She was glad to see how fond he was growing of the baby, though it tickled her a good deal; it was comic that he should set so much store on another man's child. He *was* peculiar and no mistake.

But one or two things surprised her. She had been used to his subservience: he was only too glad to do anything for her in the old days, she was accustomed to see him cast down by a cross word and in ecstasy at a kind one; he was different now, and she said to herself that he had not improved in the last year. It never struck her for a moment that there could be any change in his feelings, and she thought it was only acting when he paid no heed to her bad temper. He wanted to read sometimes and told her to stop talking: she did not know whether to flare up or to sulk, and was so puzzled that she did neither. Then came the conversation in which he told her that he intended their relations to be platonic, and, remembering an incident of their common past, it occurred to her that he dreaded the possibility of her being pregnant. She took pains to reassure him. It made no difference. She was the sort of woman who was unable to realise that a man might not have her own obsession with sex; her relations with men had been purely on those lines; and she could not understand that they ever had other interests. The thought struck her that Philip was in love with somebody else, and she watched him, suspecting nurses at the hospital or people he met out; but artful questions led her to the conclusion that there was no one dangerous in the Athelny household; and it forced itself upon her also that Philip, like most medical students, was unconscious of the sex of the nurses with whom his work threw him in contact. They were associated in his mind with a faint odour of iodoform. Philip received no letters, and there was no girl's photograph among his belongings. If he was in love with someone, he was very clever at hiding it; and he answered all Mildred's questions with frankness and apparently without suspicion that there was any motive in them.

"I don't believe he's in love with anybody else," she said to herself at last.

It was a relief, for in that case he was certainly still in love with her; but it made his behaviour very puzzling. If he was going to treat her like that why did he ask her to come and live at the flat? It was unnatural. Mildred was not a woman who conceived the possibility of compassion, generosity, or kindness. Her only conclusion was that Philip was queer. She took it into her head that the reasons for his conduct were chivalrous; and, her imagination filled with the extravagances of cheap fiction, she pictured to herself all sorts of romantic explanations for his delicacy. Her fancy ran riot with bitter misunderstandings, purifications by fire, snow-white souls, and death in the cruel cold of a Christmas night. She made up her mind that when they went to Brighton she would put an end to all his nonsense; they would be alone there, everyone would think them husband and wife, and there would be the pier and the band. When she found that nothing would induce Philip to share the same room with her, when he spoke to her about it with a tone in his voice she had never heard before, she suddenly realised that he did not want her. She was astounded. She remembered all he had said in the past and how desperately he had loved her. She felt humiliated and angry, but she had a sort of native insolence which carried her through. He needn't think she was in love with him, because she wasn't. She hated him sometimes, and she longed to humble him; but she found herself singularly powerless; she did not know which way to handle him. She began to be a little nervous with him. Once or twice she cried. Once or twice she set herself to be particularly nice to him; but when she took his arm while they walked along the front at night he made some excuse in a while to release himself, as though it were unpleasant for him to be touched by her. She could not make it out. The only hold she had over him was through the baby, of whom he seemed to grow fonder and fonder: she could make him white with anger by giving the child a slap or a push; and the only time the old, tender smile came back into his eyes was when she stood with the baby in her arms. She noticed it when she was being photographed like that by a man on the beach, and afterwards she often stood in the same way for Philip to look at her.

When they got back to London Mildred began looking for the work she had asserted was so easy to find; she wanted now to be independent of Philip; and she thought of the satisfaction with which she would announce to him that she was going into rooms and would take the child with her. But her heart failed her when she came into closer contact with the possibility. She had grown unused to the long hours, she did not want to be at the beck and call of a manageress, and her dignity revolted at the thought of wearing once more a uniform. She had made out to such of the neighbours as she knew that they were comfortably off: it would be a come-down if they heard that she had to go out and work. Her natural indolence asserted itself. She did not want to leave Philip, and so long as he was willing to provide for her, she did not see why she should. There was no money to throw away, but she got her board and lodging, and he might get better off. His uncle was an old man and might die any day, he would come into a little then, and even as things were, it was better than slaving from morning till night for a few shillings a week. Her efforts relaxed; she kept on reading the advertisement columns of the daily paper merely to show that she wanted to do something if anything that was worth her while presented itself. But panic seized her, and she was afraid that Philip would grow tired of supporting her. She had no hold over him at all now, and she fancied that he only allowed her to stay there because he was fond of the baby. She brooded over it all, and she thought to herself angrily that she would make him pay for all this some day. She could not reconcile herself to the fact that he no longer cared for her. She would make him. She suffered from pique, and sometimes in a curious fashion she desired Philip. He was so cold now that it exasperated her. She thought of him in that way incessantly. She thought that he was treating her very badly, and she did not know what she had done to deserve it. She kept on saying to herself that it was unnatural they should live like that. Then she thought that if things were different and she were going to have a baby, he would be sure to marry her. He was funny, but he was a gentleman in every sense of the word, no one could deny that. At last it became an obsession with her, and she made up her mind to force a change in their relations. He never even kissed her now, and she wanted him to: she remembered how ardently he had been used to press her lips. It gave her a curious feeling to think of it. She often looked at his mouth.

One evening, at the beginning of February, Philip told her that he was dining with Lawson, who was giving a party in his studio to celebrate his birthday; and he would not be in till late; Lawson had bought a couple of bottles of the punch they favoured from the tavern in Beak Street, and they proposed to have a merry evening. Mildred asked if there were going to be women there, but Philip told her there were not; only men had been invited; and they were just going to sit and talk and smoke: Mildred did not think it sounded very amusing; if she were a painter she would have half a dozen models about. She went to bed, but could not sleep, and presently an idea struck her; she got up and fixed the catch on the wicket at the landing, so that Philip could not get in. He came back about one, and she heard him curse when he found that the wicket was closed. She got out of bed and opened.

"Why on earth did you shut yourself in? I'm sorry I've dragged you out of bed."

"I left it open on purpose, I can't think how it came to be shut."

"Hurry up and get back to bed, or you'll catch cold."

He walked into the sitting-room and turned up the gas. She followed him in. She went up to the fire.

"I want to warm my feet a bit. They're like ice."

He sat down and began to take off his boots. His eyes were shining and his cheeks were flushed. She thought he had been drinking.

"Have you been enjoying yourself?" she asked, with a smile.

"Yes, I've had a ripping time."

Philip was quite sober, but he had been talking and laughing, and he was excited still. An evening of that sort reminded him of the old days in Paris. He was in high spirits. He took his pipe out of his pocket and filled it.

"Aren't you going to bed?" she asked.

"Not yet, I'm not a bit sleepy. Lawson was in great form. He talked sixteen to the dozen from the moment I got there till the moment I left."

"What did you talk about?"

"Heaven knows! Of every subject under the sun. You should have seen us all shouting at the tops of our voices and nobody listening."

Philip laughed with pleasure at the recollection, and Mildred laughed too. She was pretty sure he had drunk more than was good for him. That was exactly what she had expected. She knew men.

"Can I sit down?" she said.

Before he could answer she settled herself on his knees.

"If you're not going to bed you'd better go and put on a dressing-gown."

"Oh, I'm all right as I am." Then putting her arms round his neck, she placed her face against his and said: "Why are you so horrid to me, Phil?"

He tried to get up, but she would not let him.

"I do love you, Philip," she said.

"Don't talk damned rot."

"It isn't, it's true. I can't live without you. I want you."

He released himself from her arms.

"Please get up. You're making a fool of yourself and you're making me feel a perfect idiot."

"I love you, Philip. I want to make up for all the harm I did you. I can't go on like this, it's not in human nature."

He slipped out of the chair and left her in it.

"I'm very sorry, but it's too late."

She gave a heart-rending sob.

"But why? How can you be so cruel?"

"I suppose it's because I loved you too much. I wore the passion out. The thought of anything of that sort horrifies me. I can't look at you now without thinking of Emil and Griffiths. One can't help those things, I suppose it's just nerves."

She seized his hand and covered it with kisses.

"Don't," he cried.

She sank back into the chair.

"I can't go on like this. If you won't love me, I'd rather go away."

"Don't be foolish, you haven't anywhere to go. You can stay here as long as you like, but it must be on the definite understanding that we're friends and nothing more."

Then she dropped suddenly the vehemence of passion and gave a soft, insinuating laugh. She sidled up to Philip and put her arms round him. She made her voice low and wheedling.

"Don't be such an old silly. I believe you're nervous. You don't know how nice I can be."

She put her face against his and rubbed his cheek with hers. To Philip her smile was an abominable leer, and the suggestive glitter of her eyes filled him with horror. He drew back instinctively.

"I won't," he said.

But she would not let him go. She sought his mouth with her lips. He took her hands and tore them roughly apart and pushed her away.

"You disgust me," he said.

"Me?"

She steadied herself with one hand on the chimney-piece. She looked at him for an instant, and two red spots suddenly appeared on her cheeks. She gave a shrill, angry laugh.

"I disgust *you*."

She paused and drew in her breath sharply. Then she burst into a furious torrent of abuse. She shouted at the top of her voice. She called him every foul name she could think of. She used language so obscene that Philip was astounded; she was always so anxious to be refined, so shocked by coarseness, that it had never occurred to him that she knew the words she used now. She came up to him and thrust her face in his. It was distorted with passion, and in her tumultuous speech the spittle dribbled over her lips.

"I never cared for you, not once, I was making a fool of you always, you bored me, you bored me stiff, and I hated you, I would never have let you touch me only for the money, and it used to make me sick when I had to let you kiss me. We laughed at you, Griffiths and me, we laughed because you was such a mug. A mug! A mug!"

Then she burst again into abominable invective. She accused him of every mean fault; she said he was stingy, she said he was dull, she said he was vain, selfish; she cast virulent ridicule on everything upon which he was most sensitive. And at last she turned to go. She kept on, with hysterical violence, shouting at him an opprobrious, filthy epithet. She seized the hand of the door and flung it open. Then she turned round and hurled at him the injury which she knew was the only one that really touched him. She threw into the word all the malice and all the venom of which she was capable. She flung it at him as though it were a blow.

"Cripple!" . . .

CONRAD AIKEN

By My Troth, Nerissa!

Originally known as an Imagist poet whose musicianship was even lovelier than his fantasy and direct vision, Conrad Aiken (born in 1889) turned to the short story and finally to the novel. *The Blue Voyage* and the *Great Circle* found few readers, but those few were forever affected. Two of Aiken's short stories are anthologists' favorites, though the collections *Bring! Bring!* (1925) and *Costumes by Eros* are studded with gems. Aiken combines an awareness of form with an artisan's cunning (he is also a craftsman, painter, and teacher) and a depth of psychopathology. Few writers are so multiple and rich in evocativeness, or so lacking in those spectacular effects that assure mass popularity. But Aiken is no friend of obscurity: he communicates with ease and sureness. In short, he is a fully aware artist within his chosen world. The picture in our selection of an utterly vapid mind in coils is a delight for its totality in so small a compass. Here one savors the perennial beauties of Aiken's English, which has made him so distinguished a poet.

FIVE o'clock. He looked at his watch, hoping that it was later—late enough for dinner. That was characteristic. He was always hoping that it was later than it really was, hoping that an hour had gone, a day had gone. Other people were anxious about being too late—he was anxious about being too early. Supreme, everlasting, devastating boredom. His watch was a symbol of that, and now as he put it back in his pocket, cherishing its warm smoothness, he cursed the hour and a half that yawned like a chasm before his next "action." He walked wearily along the gravel path. Piles of leaves were burning, and the smoke came heavily over his face. Wet leaves: there had been a shower. He was irritatingly conscious of his stick, which kept entangling itself with his coat, and which was so light that it would not properly thrust against the gusty wind. Besides, it was too long, struck the ground too sharply, and was particularly annoying in a deserted street, where its rhythmic clack on the stones made him feel like screaming. In a moonlit street it became positively portentous, and it seemed to him that he was trying to balance a telegraph pole. It scraped now against an unforeseen rise in the path, and he drew it up under his arm, regaining a little of his composure. Then he stepped off the path onto the grass, swung the stick triumphantly, and thrust it into the ground, at every step, with delight. He impaled an empty match-box. He impaled a yellow leaf. He aimed it as if it were a gun at a robin, who took no notice, but, with suddenly lowered head, performed a little mechanical run and then stood still, listening for a worm. "Fly away south, old man! No worms here, unless you listen to my head." His face did not change expression—he was conscious that it didn't—but in imagination he heard himself laughing loudly.

That was exactly the problem, the problem that kept him awake late at night, that woke him up early, and that nevertheless made him long for sleep as he longed for nothing else—profound, profound nothingness and annihilation of sleep, complete and harmonious escape. Yes, that was the problem: to find and name this worm that gnawed at his brain. What on earth was this new obsession for—this horror of shaving? He had had it now for three days and three nights, and his nights it had made hideous; for his thoughts kept reverting to the new razor, and whenever he saw it, in his mind's eye, lying there on the shelf in all its bright sheerness, he felt a spastic contraction of the chest. He had lain awake for two hours, the first morning, wondering whether he would dare to shave with it. In a sinister way it had seemed to be connected, as with steel wires, to his jangled nerves and gradually he had become convinced that as soon as he touched it some obscure impulse would turn the blade against his flesh. He had conquered his terror—had managed to shave, trembling a little, and noting with astonishment the pallor of his face, and the narrow intensity of his pupils. . . . Well, obviously, it was too late in the day for any mere timidity about shaving to develop! It was something deeper than that. Whatever the worm was, it had bored into the very center, and his brain was honey-combed with galleries—hollow enough to float—its specific gravity markedly impaired.

He sat down on a wet bench, and as he did so the sun came out and made a pale sparkling brightness of the grass. This was refreshing: it gave a change of scene. He was not exactly sure where it put him. He was barefooted, that was clear, and he was exquisitely conscious of the cool, dispersed wetness of the grass under his sensitive feet, and of the sharpness of twigs. Coarse, thick, ropy spider's webs glistened on the dingy box-hedge, and at the bottom of every silken funnel he could see a vigorous spider with curved claws. The smell of wet leaves was like early morning. Then there was some question of nasturtiums, matted snakily together by a heavy rain in the night—acrid: he liked the yellow ones best. . . . The warm smell of burning leaves came again over him, and the thought of the razor, with its sinister bracketing of edge and flesh. He began to compose a letter to Sara. Should he address her by her "pet" name—Sahara—the name originally suggested by the fact that she pronounced her name to rhyme with the desert? Too flippant at this crisis.

"My dear Sara: Why is it that you are made of flesh—why, indeed, if God, as it is reported, created you in His image, did He not dispense for once with the common straw and clay and dip His hands into the clear brightness of the ether? I cannot, no, I have made up my mind on the point, reconcile myself to the fact that your mouth, which I once in a vision saw as a flower without function, exists really for the taking in of food and of men; that you have an alimentary canal, liable at the most inopportune moments to utter its obscene borborygmi—or as Jake coarsely puts it, its bubbling of the gut—amid harmonies seemingly more ethereal; that you have kidneys, and liver, and ductless glands, all plying at all times their little secret juicy trades. It is no good retorting, as I hear you angrily retort (between mouthfuls of the best beef), that all this holds just as well of me. Of course. To be sure. Certainly. That's precisely why I should like to find in some hallowed corner of this dingy universe a creature of a beauty and texture more translucent—compounded, let us say, of air and fire. You will say that this is an unreasonable demand. But if it is really unreasonable why does it occur to me—is it only a disease of the flesh that enables flesh to conceive the finer-than-flesh? . . . At all events, my dear Sahara Desert, what I passionately want you to understand at this crisis in our lives is that if I now take flight from you and recede rapidly into the blue obscure, weaving about myself a fine shroud of stellar air, it is not the individual but the generic you that I flee from, finding horrible. For this horror is ubiquitous—its yellow tooth is everywhere, in all women, in all men. I have fought against it for years. Yes, I recall its fangs in even my very first love-affair, when years ago walking in a dark London square with a woman whose affection for me was a little too public and unrestrained (she suddenly tried to embrace me, murmuring, no, shouting, passionate phrases!) I observed a sign, happily emblazoned against the palings of a fence, 'Organs and street cries prohibited near here,' and read it aloud to her, with the fortunate result that she was dissolved into shrieks of laughter. . . . I do not know in the least why I should want to recite to you this oblique episode of my past. Perhaps only because it gives you a little of my background. But background is so important and so complicated! What use to give you a mere fragment like this? Isn't it equally important that I should tell you that I dislike intensely the odor of female perspiration; that I have an obscure passion for jungles, snake-infested thickets, and the sound of horns; that a dull pencil makes me miserable and inert, as if paralyzed, and that I find intolerable any business dealing with a stranger? . . . Even so, I make hardly the slightest of beginnings. I'm a sort of nexus of loathings. As I sit here in the park, with the sun just dipping his chin into a swift cloud and a few drops of rain beginning to fall among moist pebbles and dead leaves, it seems to me that I am really a vast net of unpleasant sensation, a net of boredom which enmeshes everything, and down the slack nerves of which run tremors of feeble disgust from the uttermost stars. What a paltry attempt at the poetic that is! I am ashamed of myself. What I mean, of course, is merely that my own nervous system is degraded—perhaps by too much sensation, and sensation too precise.

"Ah, Sahara, those precise sensations! Did you know that there has always been something peculiarly offensive to me in the line of the gums above your upper teeth? On chilly days, too, I have noticed that the part of the chest which shows above your blouse is very apt to be of a bluish hue which I find extraordinarily repulsive. And then, to pass from the physiological to the psychological, how singularly you have misjudged, from the very outset, the sort of stimulus with which to play upon me! If only you had known how to be proud instead of humble, reserved instead of placatory, mysterious instead of dumb! . . . These are extraordinary things to be saying to a woman at the very outset of 'love': no doubt you will be simply dumbfounded. 'How is it possible?' I hear you asking. 'Did you not kiss me last night? Surely there was no sham about that? You loved me then—it is possible that love should evaporate so soon?' . . . Yes, I loved you last night, that is true. When I left my own lodgings and started off in the evening to see you I will not deny that I did so with tremendous excitement, that I had taken the very last care with my appearance, and that all the way, in the street car, my imagination, like an expert contrapuntalist, performed the most amazing feats of virtuosity with the simple theme of 'you.' I saw you burning like a creature of light, alternately fusing and paling with the pulse of fire. I trembled when I thought of you. I could feel waves of psychic blindness go over me periodically, and when at last I climbed the steps to your house I felt as if my head and my body had been somehow separated. . . . But then, when I saw you, these feelings began rapidly to change! I saw something a little coarse in you; I found you to be stupid; the curve of your jaw seemed to me to be too heavy. You manifested also a disposition to abuse those gestures which I had at first found charming. How sick I became of your trick of looking up at me from your pillow with silly admiration, just allowing me a glimpse of your small blue eyes between the fingers of your hand!

How I loathed you for the arch way in which you kept turning your back. I responded to these things as you expected, but you did not guess with what weariness and anger.

"However, it was not at all my intention to say things that might injure you—not at all, not at all. What I want intensely, miserably, to make clear to you is that it is not in any real sense you that I thus shamefully betray and abandon, but humanity, the world, and, above all myself. In this particular case, I suppose I might say that the difficulty lies in the fact that when I came to you it was with the last failing spark of my wearied enthusiasm for love-affairs. But it is really far more complicated than that—it is not fair to you or to me to let you suppose that I am merely a jaded Don Juan. Not so. My love-affairs have been very few, very fugitive; and if now my love for you is as it were, stillborn, it is because at last my faith in beauty seems dead. . . . If you could realize, Sara, how much I *want* to love you! how infinitely healing it would be to me! But I am powerless in this, as I am in everything; I have no gusto for life; I am a mass of complex contradictory impulses that leave me in a mammering and at a stay. When I fall asleep at night it is with the hope that I may never wake. When I wake in the morning, it is with passionate resentment. I look ahead through the day in the faint hope that I may find the promise of one event that will be pleasant. If it happens that I am to dine in the evening with X., then I live through the tedium of the day, and all its exasperating trifles, in expectation of that one hour of pleasure—which, under so great a strain, usually turns out to be rather dull. . . .

"And then, finally, there are my obsessions, which I cannot explain. My latest is a horror of shaving! I cannot think of a razor, of a sharp edge of any sort, without a shudder which touches the very center of my vitality. When I take up my razor in the morning it is almost with a conviction that some obscure impulse will transmit itself to the blade, which will suddenly turn against my weak flesh. . . . By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world. . . ."

. . . What an admirable letter! How profoundly it would stir the chords of pity in Sara's heart! . . . But the pace of the rain was beginning to quicken, a continual patter came from the dead leaves, and he rose, buttoning his coat. Ten minutes to six. . . . If he walked through the park, slowly, and then by the long way through Essex Street, he would reach the station just in time to meet Sara for dinner. He began walking. Leaves blew along the path before him, came down in streams from the blown trees. Incredible melancholy. All that was needed was a dejected faun shivering in a hollow tree and trying to blow a melody from his rain-soaked reed. Everything was gray in the gray light. Large drops from the boughs of trees pattered on the rim of his hat, and the crook of his stick, becoming wet, rubbed irritatingly on the palm of his hand. Sodden leaves: sodden newspapers: sodden world.

To be or not to be: no, that wasn't the question at all, but whether or not to dine with Sara. To approach her through this silver jungle of rain, with all its bells; to weave himself like a shuttle through this vast and exquisite fabric of mercurial silver, finally coming upon Sara, in a green dress, waiting happily; to see for a flash the clear quality of her face in rain-light, and to hear the first full sound of her voice under an umbrella tense and murmurous with rain; to feel a drop of water on the back of his hand, and to hear her laugh—didn't all this, after all, offer a sort of beauty? . . . Yes, no question, it did. But it was only for the first instant. After that came the tedious necessity of finding a restaurant where they would be safe from the eyes of acquaintances, the necessity of talking and talking with Sara, of touching her foot under the table, of spending three desolating hours of the evening with her—she wouldn't let him off with less. Agonizing complications. Misery a thousand miles deep. If he did go to her, what should he say? . . . He would greet her wearily. She looked concerned—no, alarmed! "Henry! You're worried. What's the matter?" "Well, Sara—don't be shocked—but to tell the truth I was wondering, all the way here, whether or not to abandon you." . . . Would she cry—grow white? No—she looked far away, at nothing, compressed her lips. "I see." . . . That's what she'd say. "You see, Sahara, in a sense you've become for me, momentarily, a symbol of life itself. And if I speak of abandoning you, what I really mean is the abandonment of everything." He couldn't prevent a touch of *vox humana* getting into that last phrase—it was a shade too much like a sob, but then, anything was permissible when one was dealing with a woman. "I don't think I mean suicide"—this was said slowly and ponderingly: the "think" was, indeed, masterly! . . . But suppose she simply, with a flash of amusement, answer "Why not?" . . . Heavens!

He turned the corner, and there was Sara just as he had foreseen, in the green dress, waiting serenely under her tinkling umbrella. She laughed frankly.

"Henry, you do look dejected!"

"Why shouldn't I? I'm thinking of committing suicide."

"Do!"

"But first I must have some dinner—I'm starving to death!"

"Very well—I'm hungry myself."

"And afterwards—I must kiss you."

"No!"

"Yes. Just behind your left ear."

“What an idea!”

“We’ll take a taxi and do a whirl about the city among the rain and puddles.”

“That sounds reasonable.”

A sudden fury possessed him. He stood still.

“Don’t be so damned reasonable! Only death is reasonable.”

He saw Sara looking at him with fright, as if she saw something horrible in his face. What did she see? A sharp green-lit vision of him hanging from a gas fixture? . . . A torrent of grief seemed to be released within him, he felt a quickening sensation in his tear-ducts; and, tightly clasping Sara’s forearm with his hand, he started walking again.

CARSON McCULLERS

A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud

Born in Georgia in 1917, Carson McCullers fell in love with the drama while still in her teens. She was almost always concerned with lunacy, murder, and coffins in these family plays, but she soon abandoned the obviously horrible for the psychologically unique. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), a novel about a deaf-mute who is the audience for an aware and clever Negro doctor, won her instant recognition and she received a Guggenheim fellowship in literature. Her second work, *Reflections in a Golden Eye,* though less intense than its predecessor, confirmed her promise. In a recent novelette, centering about a "sad café," she bids fair to rival Faulkner in his own chosen field; with respect to thematic originality, she has gone beyond him. Miss McCullers has an uncanny ability to get under the skin of men. In our selection the old man—the Ancient Mariner of our time—holds the boy with his glittering eye and records the ravage that woman has wrought on a man who married late. The nature of his woman is suggested throughout the writing: it is explicit nowhere.

IT was raining that morning, and still very dark. When the boy reached the streetcar café he had almost finished his route and he went in for a cup of coffee. The place was an all-night café owned by a bitter and stingy man called Leo. After the raw, empty street the café seemed friendly and bright: along the counter there were a couple of soldiers, three spinners from the cotton mill, and in a corner a man who sat hunched over with his nose and half his face down in a beer mug. The boy wore a helmet such as aviators wear. When he went into the café he unbuckled the chin strap and raised the right flap up over his pink little ear; often as he drank his coffee someone would speak to him in a friendly way. But this morning Leo did not look into his face and none of the men were talking. He paid and was leaving the café when a voice called out to him:

"Son! Hey Son!"

He turned back and the man in the corner was crooking his finger and nodding to him. He had brought his face out of the beer mug and he seemed suddenly very happy. The man was long and pale, with a big nose and faded orange hair.

"Hey Son!"

The boy went toward him. He was an undersized boy of about twelve, with one shoulder drawn higher than the other because of the weight of the paper sack. His face was shallow, freckled, and his eyes were round child eyes.

"Yeah Mister?"

The man laid one hand on the paper-boy's shoulder, then grasped the boy's chin and turned his face slowly from one side to the other. The boy shrank back uneasily.

"Say! What's the big idea?"

The boy's voice was shrill; inside the café it was suddenly very quiet.

The man said slowly: "I love you."

All along the counter the men laughed. The boy, who had scowled and sidled away, did not know what to do. He looked over the counter at Leo, and Leo watched him with a weary, brittle jeer. The boy tried to laugh also. But the man was serious and sad.

"I did not mean to tease you, Son," he said. "Sit down and have a beer with me. There is something I have to explain."

Cautiously, out of the corner of his eye, the paper boy questioned the men along the counter to see what he should do. But they had gone back to their beer or their breakfast and did not notice him. Leo put a cup of coffee on the counter and a little jug of cream.

"He is a minor," Leo said.

The paper boy slid himself up onto the stool. His ear beneath the upturned flap of the helmet was very small and red. The man was nodding at him soberly. "It is important," he said. Then he reached in his hip pocket and brought out something which he held up in the palm of his hand for the boy to see.

"Look very carefully," he said.

The boy stared, but there was nothing to look at very carefully. The man held in his big, grimy palm a photograph. It was the face of a woman, but blurred, so that only the hat and the dress she was wearing stood out clearly.

"See?" the man asked.

The boy nodded and the man placed another picture in his palm. The woman was standing on a beach in a bathing suit. The suit made her stomach very big, and that was the main thing you noticed.

"Got a good look?" He leaned over closer and finally asked: "You ever seen her before?"

The boy sat motionless, staring slantwise at the man. "Not so I know of."

"Very well." The man blew on the photographs and put them back into his pocket. "That was my wife."

"Dead?" the boy asked.

Slowly the man shook his head. He pursed his lips as though about to whistle and answered in a long-drawn way: "Nuuu—" he said. "I will explain."

The beer on the counter before the man was in a large brown mug. He did not pick it up to drink. Instead he bent down and, putting his face over the rim, he rested there for a moment. Then with both hands he tilted the mug and sipped.

"Some night you'll go to sleep with your big nose in a mug and drown," said Leo. "Prominent transient drowns in beer. That would be a cute death."

The paper boy tried to signal to Leo. While the man was not looking he screwed up his face and worked his mouth to question soundlessly: "Drunk?" But Leo only raised his eyebrows and turned away to put some pink strips of bacon on the grill. The man pushed the mug away from him, straightened himself, and folded his loose crooked hands on the counter. His face was sad as he looked at the paper boy. He did not blink, but from time to time the lids closed down with delicate gravity over his pale green eyes. It was nearing dawn and the boy shifted the weight of the paper sack.

"I am talking about love," the man said. "With me it is a science."

The boy half slid down from the stool. But the man raised his forefinger, and there was something about him that held the boy and would not let him go away.

"Twelve years ago I married the woman in the photograph, She was my wife for one year, nine months, three days, and two nights. I loved her. Yes . . ." He tightened his blurred, rambling voice and said again: "I loved her. I thought also that she loved me. I was a railroad engineer. She had all home comforts and luxuries. It never crept into my brain that she was not satisfied. But do you know what happened?"

"Mgneeow!" said Leo.

The man did not take his eyes from the boy's face. "She left me. I came in one night and the house was empty and she was gone. She left me."

"With a fellow?" the boy asked.

Gently the man placed his palm down on the counter. "Why naturally, Son. A woman does not run off like that alone."

The café was quiet, the soft rain black and endless in the street outside. Leo pressed down the frying bacon with the prongs of his long fork: "So you have been chasing the floozie for eleven years. You frazzled old rascal!"

For the first time the man glanced at Leo. "Please don't be vulgar. Besides, I was not speaking to you." He turned back to the boy and said in a trusting and secretive undertone: "Let's not pay any attention to him. O. K.?"

The paper boy nodded doubtfully.

"It was like this," the man continued. "I am a person who feels many things. All my life one thing after another has impressed me. Moonlight. The leg of a pretty girl. One thing after another. But the point is that when I had enjoyed anything there was a peculiar sensation as though it was laying around loose in me. Nothing seemed to finish itself up or fit in with the other things. Women? I had my portion of them. The same. Afterward laying around loose in me. I was a man who had never loved."

Very slowly he closed his eyelids, and the gesture was like a curtain drawn at the end of a scene in a play. When he spoke again his voice was excited and the words came fast—the lobes of his large, loose ears seemed to tremble.

"Then I met this woman. I was fifty-one years old and she always said she was thirty. I met her at a filling station and we were married within three days. And do you know what it was like? I just can't tell you. All I had ever felt was gathered together around this woman. Nothing lay around loose in me any more but was finished up by her."

The man stopped suddenly and stroked his long nose. His voice sank down to a steady and reproachful undertone: "I'm not explaining this right. What happened was this. There were these beautiful feelings and loose little pleasures inside me. And this woman was something like an assembly line for my soul. I run these little pieces of myself through her and I come out complete. Now do you follow me?"

"What was her name?" the boy asked.

"Oh," he said. "I called her Dodo. But that is immaterial."

"Did you try to make her come back?"

The man did not seem to hear. "Under the circumstances you can imagine how I felt when she left me."

Leo took the bacon from the grill and folded two strips of it between a bun. He had a gray face, with slitted eyes, and a pinched nose saddled by faint blue shadows. One of the mill workers signaled for more coffee and Leo poured it. He did not give refills on coffee free. The spinner ate breakfast there every morning, but the better Leo knew his customers the stingier he treated them. He nibbled his own bun as though he grudged it to himself.

"And you never got hold of her again?"

The boy did not know what to think of the man, and his child's face was uncertain with mingled curiosity and doubt. He was new on the paper route; it was still strange to him to be out in the town in the black, queer early morning.

"Yes," the man said. "I took a number of steps to get her back. I went around trying to locate her. I went to Tulsa where she had folks. And to Mobile. I went to every town she had ever mentioned to me, and I hunted down every man she had formerly been connected with. Tulsa, Atlanta, Chicago, Cheehaw, Memphis . . . For the better part of two years I chased around the country trying to lay hold of her."

"But the pair of them had vanished from the face of the earth!" said Leo.

"Don't listen to him," the man said confidentially. "And also just forget those two years. They are not important. What matters is that around the third year a curious thing begun to happen to me."

"What?" the boy asked.

The man leaned down and tilted his mug to take a sip of beer. But as he hovered over the mug his nostrils fluttered slightly; he sniffed the staleness of the beer and did not drink. "Love is a curious thing to begin with. At first I thought only of getting her back. It was a kind of mania. But then as time went on I tried to remember her. But do you know what happened?"

"No," the boy said.

"When I laid myself down on a bed and tried to think about her my mind became a blank. I couldn't see her. I would take out her pictures and look. No good. Nothing doing. A blank. Can you imagine it?"

"Say Mac!" Leo called down the counter. "Can you imagine this bozo's mind a blank!"

Slowly, as though fanning away flies, the man waved his hand. His green eyes were concentrated and fixed on the shallow little face of the paper boy.

"But a sudden piece of glass on a sidewalk. Or a nickel tune in a music box. A shadow on a wall at night. And I would remember. It might happen in a street and I would cry or bang my head against a lamp-post. You follow me?"

"A piece of glass . . ." the boy said.

"Anything. I would walk around and I had no power of how and when to remember her. You think you can put up a kind of shield. But remembering don't come to a man face forward—it corners around sideways. I was at the mercy of everything I saw and heard. Suddenly instead of me combing the countryside to find her she begun to chase me around in my very soul. *She* chasing *me,* mind you! And in my soul."

The boy asked finally: "What part of the country were you in then?"

"Ooh," the man groaned. "I was a sick mortal. It was like smallpox. I confess, Son, that I boozed. I fornicated. I committed any sin that suddenly appealed to me. I am loath to confess it but I will do so. When I recall that period it is all curdled in my mind, it was so terrible."

The man leaned his head down and tapped his forehead on the counter. For a few seconds he stayed bowed over in this position, the back of his stringy neck covered with orange furze, his hands with their long warped fingers held palm to palm in an attitude of prayer. Then the man straightened himself; he was smiling and suddenly his face was bright and tremulous and old.

"It was in the fifth year that it happened," he said. "And with it I started my science."

Leo's mouth jerked with a pale, quick grin. "Well none of we boys are getting any younger," he said. Then with sudden anger he balled up a dishcloth he was holding and threw it down hard on the floor. "You draggle-tailed old Romeo!"

"What happened?" the boy asked.

The old man's voice was high and clear: "Peace," he answered.

"Huh?"

"It is hard to explain scientifically, Son," he said. "I guess the logical explanation is that she and I had fleed around from each other for so long that finally we just got tangled up together and lay down and quit. Peace. A queer and beautiful blankness. It was spring in Portland and the rain came every afternoon. All evening I just stayed there on my bed in the dark. And that is how the science come to me."

The windows in the streetcar were pale blue with light. The two soldiers paid for their beers and opened the door—one of the soldiers combed his hair and wiped off his muddy puttees before they went outside. The three mill workers bent silently over their breakfasts. Leo's clock was ticking on the wall.

"It is this. And listen carefully. I meditated on love and reasoned it out. I realized what is wrong with us. Men fall in love for the first time. And what do they fall in love with?"

The boy's soft mouth was partly open and he did not answer.

"A woman," the old man said. "Without science, with nothing to go by, they undertake the most dangerous and sacred experience in God's earth. They fall in love with a woman. Is that correct, Son?"

"Yeah," the boy said faintly.

"They start at the wrong end of love. They begin at the climax. Can you wonder it is so miserable? Do you know how men should love?"

The old man reached over and grasped the boy by the collar of his leather jacket. He gave him a gentle little shake and his green eyes gazed down unblinking and grave.

"Son, do you know how love should be begun?"

The boy sat small and listening and still. Slowly he shook his head. The old man leaned closer and whispered:

"A tree. A rock. A cloud."

It was still raining outside in the street: a mild, gray, endless rain. The mill whistle blew for the six o'clock shift and the three spinners paid and went away. There was no one in the café but Leo, the old man, and the little paper boy.

"The weather was like this in Portland," he said. "At the time my science was begun. I meditated and I started very cautious. I would pick up something from the street and take it home with me. I bought a goldfish and I concentrated on the goldfish and I loved it. I graduated from one thing to another. Day by day I was getting this technique. On the road from Portland to San Diego—"

"Aw shut up!" screamed Leo suddenly. "Shut up! Shut up!"

The old man still held the collar of the boy's jacket; he was trembling and his face was earnest and bright and wild. "For six years now I have gone around by myself and built up my science. And now I am a master, Son. I can love anything. No longer do I have to think about it even. I see a street full of people and a beautiful light comes in me. I watch a bird in the sky. Or I meet a traveler on the road. Everything, Son. And anybody. All stranger and all loved! Do you realize what a science like mine can mean?"

The boy held himself stiffly, his hands curled tight around the counter edge. Finally he asked: "Did you ever really find that lady?"

"What? What say, Son?"

"I mean," the boy asked timidly. "Have you fallen in love with a woman again?"

The old man loosened his grasp on the boy's collar. He turned away and for the first time his green eyes had a vague and scattered look. He lifted the mug from the counter, drank down the yellow beer. His head was shaking slowly from side to side. Then finally he answered: "No, Son. You see that is the last step in my science. I go cautious. And I am not quite ready yet."

"Well!" said Leo. "Well well well!"

The old man stood in the open doorway. "Remember," he said. Framed there in the gray damp light of the early morning he looked shrunken and seedy and frail. But his smile was bright. "Remember I love you," he said with a last nod. And the door closed quietly behind him.

The boy did not speak for a long time. He pulled down the bangs on his forehead and slid his grimy little forefinger around the rim of his empty cup. Then without looking at Leo he finally asked:

"Was he drunk?"

"No," said Leo shortly.

The boy raised his clear voice higher. "Then was he a dope fiend?"

"No."

The boy looked up at Leo, and his flat little face was desperate, his voice urgent and shrill. "Was he crazy? Do you think he was a lunatic?" The paper boy's voice dropped suddenly with doubt. "Leo? Or not?"

But Leo would not answer him. Leo had run a night café for fourteen years, and he held himself to be a critic of craziness. There were the town characters and also the transients who roamed in from the night. He knew the manias of all of them. But he did not want to satisfy the questions of the waiting child. He tightened his pale face and was silent.

So the boy pulled down the right flap of his helmet and as he turned to leave he made the only comment that seemed safe to him, the only remark that could not be laughed down and despised:

"He sure has done a lot of traveling."

ELIZABETH BOWEN

The Girl with the Stoop

Elizabeth Bowen was born in 1899 in Dublin, of the Anglo-Irish squirearchy once termed "The Ascendancy." Her education has been mostly English, and she attended school in Charles Darwin's old home. Miss Bowen lived alone for five years in England and the Continent, but since her marriage she has lived chiefly in England where, as she says, "her only thought is writing." A miserable stay in Italy with an aunt led to *The Hotel* (1927) and among her many brilliant novels we may single out *The House in Paris* (1935) and *The Death of the Heart* (1938). Our short story is reprinted from the volume *Look at All Those Roses* (1941). Elizabeth Bowen focusses her sharp vision on sections of the wealthier middle class. She is a clear-sighted depicter of the weaknesses of a society that profits meanly by its past and lacks a feeling for destiny. From this drab world it culls small dramas and, sometimes, bitter deceptions. Her art is sure, modern, and exact. Faultlessly she re-creates the desert of the emotions and she borrows nothing from the future.

A SMALL SUMMER town, seaside, in the late rainy autumn has a left-behind air. Simply to live here is not fully to live—and Tibbie, a summer girl, a born holiday-maker, had not learnt yet how to feel like a resident. Very few things ruffled her calm nature, but she did not feel at ease in her aunt's house. In this villa, everyone except Tibbie seemed to be always going up or down the stairs: Tibbie felt she could seldom fully relax. . . . This was a Wednesday morning, about eleven; she had washed three pairs of silk stockings and written a picture postcard, and that seemed to be all she had to do. For some time she watched the rain from the bow window, while desultorily teasing her aunt's cat. Then, though it did not stop raining, the sky lightened a little; brighter reflections appeared on the wet bushes, the wet asphalt garden path. Tibbie feared to linger in the drawing-room —her aunt might come down and find something for her to do. So she heaved herself out of the armchair with a sigh, unhung her mackintosh from the hall rack, buttoned herself to the chin, tucked her curls inside an oil-silk hood, and went out—went out with no object at all.

The residential road led straight down to the sea. Behind their neat white gates the villas were in a torpor: all the people in them might have died in their sleep. She did not even wonder whether they had. The fishmonger's boy, in a glistening mackintosh cape, bicycled slowly past her, whistling a little flat. He just gave her a look, but she did not even see him. The wet, salt air met her forehead, creeping under her hood. Her face, with the long nose dustily freckled, the sweet, mild, crumpled, indeterminate mouth, lolled a little forward over her high collar, like a flower without the sense to grow up straight.

Tibbie was staying here with her Aunt Cara simply to put in time. She was engaged to be married; she should be making her trousseau; she had brought lengths of pink ninon to sew. The young man was in India; he had proposed by letter; in April he would return to claim his inert bride. Aunt Cara, in common with the other relations, supposed marriage might pull Tibbie together. She was sorry to see so few letters go to the mail, fearing Tibbie might let the young man slip. She pointed out to Tibbie how many nice English girls were to be met in India, and how neglect tries the most faithful young man's heart. But Tibbie would say: "Oh, no, Tom loves me, I'm sure."

This morning, the sea front was void and dejected-looking. The tide was out, leaving stretches of dead sand. The empty bandstand dripped; drops slipped through the slats of seats. Tibbie's equable little heart sank. But one reach of the promenade she always walked down with pleasure—she looked forward to passing the Palace Hotel. This great de luxe hotel, dazzlingly white and lofty, all glass lounges, balconies, boxes of flowers, and with its cascade of marble steps, was the chief glory of the quiet resort. Even in autumn it had a sort of season: rich convalescents stayed there, or people who played golf. At tea time a band played; all day long maroon pages could be seen at attention inside the revolving door. Yes, even to dawdle past the Palace Hotel was to feel oneself lapped by its sumptuous mystery . . . Ungloved hands plunged shyly in her mackintosh pockets, Tibbie, unbending her stoop a little, threw up the look of a dreamer at the sun lounge windows, those great steamy vistas of plate-glass.

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Francis, leaning forward against the plate-glass window, gripping the arms of his cripple's chair, cried: "There she goes! There goes that girl with the stoop!"

"Does she?" said Geoff, unmoved, inside *Esquire*. Then he remembered he ought to humour Francis; he looked politely over the magazine. Indoor hotel life made Geoff apathetic; this morning the too-rich breakfast lay on his stomach; the steam heating put a band round his head.

"She looked at us, too," said Francis. He added, knitting his forehead: "I wonder where she's off to?"

"She isn't in any hurry. Where could a girl be off to, in this hole?"

Francis flushed and immediately said, stiffly: "Oh, all right, all right; I know it's a frightful place. For God's sake, get out if you're bored. Why don't you get back to London? I don't want anyone martyred because of me."

"Oh, shut up. I didn't mean it like that."

Geoff said to himself that that was the worst of Francis—things kept being so tricky the whole time. You never knew where you might put your foot next. Francis had been sent down here by his rich father for a blow of sea air before the winter set in, and Geoff, his big, ordinary first cousin, was there, too, as a guest, to cheer Francis up. The boys were the same age, but matters of health and money created a rather cruel contrast between them. Geoff, born hard up, had been glad to accept the place in the family business that should have been Francis's. He had been given a week's leave from the business to come down here and live like a fighting cock. But his animal charm and his animal spirits wilted; he failed to cheer Francis up, and he did not have much fun. He longed to go off to golf, but that seemed shabby: not part of the bargain of being here. Altogether, he felt rather a flop. It was Francis who had first called this place a hole, but Geoff saw now he had been wrong to agree. . . . On fine days they would go up and down the sea front, Francis adeptly steering his motor chair. This morning it was too wet to do even that. Anxious to make amends, Geoff put down *Esquire* and looked politely after his cousin's girl with the stoop. "Well, she's not my type," he said, as nicely as ever. "But, of course, you can't really judge, in a mackintosh."

"She blinks like that at us every time we see her. She's so shy and vague—she's exactly perfect, I think."

"Well, that seems too bad—I don't see what one can do. She's not quite the sort of girl one could—"

Francis said, with his sad, unkind mocking smile: "I thought you once said you could pick anyone up . . . ?"

"Well, a girl's a girl, of course. But—"

"Oh, all right, all right," said Francis. "Don't think any more of it. Sorry I ever spoke. I detest asking people to do things. . . ." Perversely, he reached across for *Esquire,* and Geoff knew one would not see it again. He said to himself that really there were limits. At the same time, he knew the matter would not be dropped; Francis never forgot anything he had set his heart on. Being crippled made him a difficult child. But what a tough time he had, what a tough time, really. This was the first thing he'd asked for that he had really wanted. It did seem a shame; it did seem rather a shame. . . . Geoff stretched and stood up against the sun lounge window. He looked thoughtfully at Tibbie walking away.

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Tibbie knew it was odd, but she could not see any harm. She would, naturally, not speak of this to her aunt—this really whirlwind invitation to tea.

For, the following morning, which was even wetter, Geoff had picked Tibbie up, in the Tudor Café, where she sat listlessly drinking her morning coffee, listening to wireless music, looking out at the sea. Geoff picked her up with an ease combined with faultless propriety that left them both decidedly gratified. He had come across to her table—she had taken her hood off and her curls were pressed flat to her head. He said: "Have you dropped a glove?" and she, knowing she wore none, said: "Have you found one?" diffidently raising her lashes. "Well, not this morning," Geoff said, with his most disarming smile. "But the fact is, I've got a message for you." "Oh—who from?" "Someone you don't know yet—unless you know him by sight. He feels he knows you by sight. . . . My cousin's a cripple," Geoff concluded. "It's pretty dull for him here. It would be ever so nice of you if you'd come to tea. . . ."

So here was Tibbie, at half-past four on a Thursday, going up in the Palace Hotel lift. She wore gloves to-day and wore her prettiest hat. She was ever so slightly disappointed at being sucked upstairs, away from the band. Geoff had not told her they had a private suite. This made everything much more dashing, grander—but was it quite so respectable, having tea upstairs? But this time next year I shall be in India, she thought.

Into the luxurious small room, with its wide sea view, Tibbie advanced nose first. Francis ran his chair forward to meet her. "I'm sorry I cannot get up," he said. He nodded to where Geoff stood by the window and said: "You've met my cousin, I think?" On satinwood tables stood vases of tawny flowers, to match the curtains of apricot silk. Francis spun round his chair to face a great big armchair into which Tibbie, hypnotized, found herself sinking down. Her face was now below his: she found herself looking up at a boy of about twenty, who was levelling on her his power of making natural people unnaturally shy. His eyes were brilliant. A dark lock fell forward over his forehead; she looked at his over-sensitive hands on the arms of his chair. Dipping her face down, Tibbie looked round the parlour under her lashes that were as soft as moths. "What lovely flowers," she said.

"They're for you—they were the best I could get: the shops are so rotten here. Oh, but I beg your pardon—you live here, perhaps?"

"No, only my aunt does. I—"

"Then it doesn't matter," said Francis. "Look, do take your gloves off, your hat—do look as though you would stay!" So Tibbie pulled her gloves off, lifted her hat off her curls. Francis stared sharply; he said: "What's that ring? Why do you wear that?"

"Oh, my engagement ring," she said, modestly. Francis let this little confident statement sink into the masculine silence of the room. Then he twitched his head round at Geoff and said: "Why isn't tea coming? Ring for tea." Reaching out, he switched on a table-lamp; the dusk outside looked desolate, dark as ink. Tea came rattling cheerfully in on a little trolley; Geoff brought his engaging presence up to the trolley; Francis invited Tibbie to pour out. She could not help peeping at the underledge of the trolley—really, she had never seen such a tea! They were all three of them getting on very nicely when Francis said with his self-torturing smile: "Where are you going to live when you are married?"

"India," she smiled. "Doesn't that seem funny?"

"No. You'll hate it. It's very hot."

"Oh, come," Geoff said, "India sounds quite a lot of fun. I should jump at going out to India myself." "Pity you can't," Francis threw at him, slightingly. But Tibbie, biting into a grape tartlet, fluttered in Geoff's direction a grateful look. Geoff went on: "Francis never thinks much of anyone's plans, you know."

Francis stonily said: "I don't need to plan; I plot. I don't believe in plans." He jerked back his lock of hair and said, directly, to Tibbie: "Neither do you." Which made her send Geoff (not Francis) a little look of surprise. Francis said: "You don't care if you go to India. . . ."

"Oh, but I do."

"You may not get there," said Francis.

Geoff started laughing and flushing. "Oh, shut up," he said. "Shut up. You'll make this girl sorry she came to tea; you'll upset her."

"Are you upset, Tibbie?" said Francis, lightly. She could not speak: she was laughing—real laughter, not awkward, forbidding laughter like Geoff's. Vibrating gently all over, like a small cat emitting a great purr, she unsteadily folded her tea napkin and put back her plate on the trolley. A flake of pastry still clung to her chin; she curved forward over her mirth. "You sound so funny," she said. "You seem to think I have no character. It's so funny, when I've only just come to tea. Why, I've got my destiny lines all over my hand. I've had my hand told three times and it always comes out the same—I am to cross the sea and live in a sunny clime."

"The sun shines almost everywhere except here. You could live in a villa in Italy."

"Oh, but you see, I don't know anyone there."

"I'm going to live in a villa in Italy."

"I thought you said you never made any plans!" crowed Tibbie, contentedly, looking round her at the lamps, the flowers, the apricot curtains that had been softly drawn. "But, of course, it's different for you," she said.

"Yes," said Francis. "It's different for me."

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Geoff saw Tibbie down in the lift. He went through the white-pillared lounge with her and pushed her gently ahead of him through the revolving door. In the door she turned round to say something, but it was cut off. When they both came out on the steps and stood where the light streamed through the dark, mild rain, he said: "Shall I see you home?" "I don't think so, because . . . All right." She unfurled her umbrella, then turned her profile away to the dark sea. "I can't sometimes believe I shall be in India," she said. "So I couldn't think what to say when your cousin talked about it. But, of course, I believe in my destiny."

"I hope you didn't think Francis impertinent?"

"Oh, no; things are different for him, aren't they? Always stuck there like that. I should have thought he'd have liked a more lively person than me."

"All the same, we are meeting again, aren't we?"

"Well, he only said, 'Don't go.' He didn't say to come back. . . ."

Next morning the sun shone; the sea shone like white glass. The promenade glistened; the curve of the bay, the promenade gardens, with their few wet roses, wore the smile of November, pallidly gay. Francis and his chair went down in the lift and were deferentially bumped by the pages down the hotel steps—then he cruised about in the sun, all by himself, looking for an advantageous position. He had sent Geoff off to play golf with a man they had met last night. Francis stopped his chair by a seat on the promenade. He wore a dark red, high-necked sweater, an expensive tweed coat; a camel-hair rug was tucked over his knees. His cheekbones were stained by a slight flush; he sat looking sideways out to sea, his whole nervous attention fixed on the promenade. For some time he sat listening for Tibbie's step; then she came round his chair and stood beside him, blinking her eyelashes in the sun.

"Well," said Francis, "here is your sunny clime."

Tibbie looked at the bench and said: "Where's Geoff gone?"

"Golf," said Francis, sharply. "Why?"

"I just wondered," she said. She dithered, then sat down. She was wearing no gloves again, so when she spread her hands on her lap, palms upward, she could frown down thoughtfully at the lines on them. Francis said: "Well? Are they different since yesterday?" "Oh, how could they change; they are me." "Did you like coming to tea?"

"Oh, yes. But you made me feel such a silly."

"Was that why you kept laughing the whole time? . . . You can write about that in your letter to India, can't you?—'Oh, I went out to tea with a funny boy.' Do you write to India often?"

"Well, I do when I can. But so little happens here, there's not much to write about."

"About?" said Francis. "But you write love letters, don't you?" Tibbie looked quite mystified; Francis continued: "Have you and that young man got nothing to say?"

"You see, when I used to know him we were not engaged, really. So I don't know what we said. We played tennis most of the time."

A contraction shook Francis's chair, and made Tibbie turn round. Perplexed she watched something playing over his face: was it pain, or was it light from the sea? He returned to himself and said in a steady voice: "You wouldn't play tennis at all well."

"No, but Tom likes me to try. . . . Why are you so sharp with me?"

"I didn't sleep last night."

"Oh, dear, that does seem a pity, when it's such a lovely morning to-day. How did you know I didn't play tennis well?"

"I know all about you: I knew you before we met. You knew I knew you, Tibbie? What made you so foolish? You're a sweet, dreadful funk, with no backbone at all. How dared you laugh when I asked you to marry me—when I'm like—*this?"* cried Francis, striking his chair.

"Oh, I *didn't* know you meant that. The whole tea was so funny. I didn't know where I was."

"You never know where you are."

"I don't understand. Do you really. . . . I mean, *do* you . . ."

"Yes, I naturally love you. I want you always by me. Haven't I just told you I didn't sleep? Listen, Tibbie: I don't ask you to love me; all I want is that you should be always there. All those mornings you've walked past and looked up at the window I've wanted to bang the glass and shout: 'Stop, you idiot: stay!' I'm sick and spoilt and impossible and I torment everyone, but now you torment me whenever you go away. Yes, I sent Geoff out yesterday morning to pick you up, like I'd send him out for a newspaper or a bunch of flowers. Yes, I thought it could all be as easy as that. But when you'd gone I knew it was terrible. I've always hated people because I've hated their pity. But I love you: you show me how to be kind. . . ."

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Francis checked himself, stopped: he reached out a hand to Tibbie, and she uncertainly let her hand fall into his. She sat looking slantwise past him at the sun-painted sea front, the shining unreal scene. They both seemed to be somewhere else. Then she drew her hand away, nervous. She said: "You are kind in such a funny way."

"Because you are always walking away, going. I want you always by me just as you are, not different. I want you in rooms with me. Stay with me all the time!"

"I'd, I'd be afraid, Francis. You sort of eat me up. Besides—"

"There is no besides. I'm all will and you've no will. I know you don't understand. But I could make you so happy. Look how you liked my room, how you liked the flowers. You understand those, perhaps? I'm rich; I could give you all those small, silly things. Oh, I could shelter you, Tibbie. It's *my* life-line that's in your hand."

"Yes, but you see . . ."

"But what?"

"But you see, I'm going away to-day. . . ." She said this looking away, and he did not say anything. "I'm going away; I got the letter this morning. Tom's mother's come to London; I've got to go up to her. You see, Tom's mother has never seen me, and they say I must certainly go to her."

Francis said, in a voice that seemed to come from a distance: "All right, all right, then: go, then, go: then come back."

But Tibbie knitted her forehead. "But Tom's mother lives right up in Scotland. And, you see, I'm to go back to Scotland with her. They all say I must. They say Tom would like me to . . ."

"You can't go," Francis said, in a perfectly dead voice. "All that's out of the question—don't you understand?"

"No, I don't—*you* told me I didn't."

"Yes, but *look!*" cried Francis, striking his chair again. "You can't leave me when I cannot come after you! You don't *want* to leave me, Tibbie, do you? . . . For God's sake, look straight at me: stop drooping your head!"

But she only bent down more; she curled up like an anemone in an unkind wind. At the same time, with a frightened obstinacy, her soft lashes stayed down on her cheek. Then she said in her mild voice, without even a falter: "But it's all settled, this morning. My aunt's sent the telegrams; she has ordered the taxi. The taxi's coming at three."

Francis paused for the last time—the unusual hesitation of someone facing the whole of life. He said: "But you and I cannot have met for nothing." But she only raised her hands, which were trembling ever so slightly, and looked again at what had been written there. "I can't change what's all settled," she said.

"At the same time, you can't go."

"But I can." Getting up, she looked in surprise at him—surprised to find herself getting up. It was as though wires moved her. As she turned the end of the bench she heard Francis, behind her, give a wrench at his chair. Her thought was: "He must not come after me—on wheels, on wheels: wheels turn very fast." She broke into a run. She ran down the promenade, stooping, breathless, not looking back once, not daring to listen. The cold sea flashed alongside of her. She reached the corner; then she lagged slowly, slowly back to her aunt's gate.

When the promenade was quite empty Francis drove his chair, slowly, in the other direction, to the Palace Hotel.

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

Flowering Judas

Texas-born (in 1894) and reared in Southern convent schools, Katherine Anne Porter describes herself as a precocious, nervous rebel. From childhood she wrote stories, but it was not until she was twenty-five that she became aware of the advanced literary movements of her time. She contributed to Leftist and *avant-garde* magazines, working carefully on a small number of stories. Three collections have been published: *Flowering Judas* (1930)—the title story is reprinted here in entirety—*Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), and *The Leaning Tower* (1944). Miss Porter is unhurried; though she is a perfectionist, her style is masterfully simple—some one has described it as "distilled." She studies women either at moments when they cannot act on their perceptions or, more often, when their nature tells them decisively what to do. Distinguished writers have lavished praises on her work—Glenway Wescott thinks that her writing sounds as though it were translations by an angel! She has no adventitious effects: for her the situation is the determinant of its own time, intensity of passion, and words.

BRAGGIONI sits heaped upon the edge of a straight-backed chair much too small for him, and sings to Laura in a furry, mournful voice. Laura has begun to find reasons for avoiding her own house until the latest possible moment, for Braggioni is there almost every night. No matter how late she is, he will be sitting there with a surly, waiting expression, pulling at his kinky yellow hair, thumbing the strings of his guitar, snarling a tune under his breath. Lupe the Indian maid meets Laura at the door, and says with a flicker of a glance towards the upper room, "He waits."

Laura wishes to lie down, she is tired of her hairpins and the feel of her long tight sleeves, but she says to him, "Have you a new song for me this evening?" If he says yes, she asks him to sing it. If he says no, she remembers his favorite one, and asks him to sing it again. Lupe brings her a cup of chocolate and a plate of rice, and Laura eats at the small table under the lamp, first inviting Braggioni, whose answer is always the same: "I have eaten, and besides, chocolate thickens the voice."

Laura says, "Sing, then," and Braggioni heaves himself into song. He scratches the guitar familiarly as though it were a pet animal, and sings passionately off key, taking the high notes in a prolonged painful squeal. Laura, who haunts the markets listening to the ballad singers, and stops every day to hear the blind boy playing his reed-flute in Sixteenth of September Street, listens to Braggioni with pitiless courtesy, because she dares not smile at his miserable performance. Nobody dares to smile at him. Braggioni is cruel to everyone, with a kind of specialized insolence, but he is so vain of his talents, and so sensitive to slights, it would require a cruelty and vanity greater than his own to lay a finger on the vast cureless wound of his self-esteem. It would require courage, too, for it is dangerous to offend him, and nobody has this courage.

Braggioni loves himself with such tenderness and amplitude and eternal charity that his followers—for he is a leader of men, a skilled revolutionist, and his skin has been punctured in honorable warfare—warm themselves in the reflected glow, and say to each other: "He has a real nobility, a love of humanity raised above mere personal affections." The excess of this self-love has flowed out, inconveniently for her, over Laura, who, with so many others, owes her comfortable situation and her salary to him. When he is in a very good humor, he tells her, "I am tempted to forgive you for being a *gringa. Gringita!"* and Laura, burning, imagines herself leaning forward suddenly, and with a sound back-handed slap wiping the suety smile from his face. If he notices her eyes at these moments he gives no sign.

She knows what Braggioni would offer her, and she must resist tenaciously without appearing to resist, and if she could avoid it she would not admit even to herself the slow drift of his intention. During these long evenings which have spoiled a long month for her, she sits in her deep chair with an open book on her knees, resting her eyes on the consoling rigidity of the printed page when the sight and sound of Braggioni singing threaten to identify themselves with all her remembered afflictions and to add their weight to her uneasy premonitions of the future. The gluttonous bulk of Braggioni has become a symbol of her many disillusions, for a revolutionist should be lean, animated by heroic faith, a vessel of abstract virtues. This is nonsense, she knows it now and is ashamed of it. Revolution must have leaders, and leadership is a career for energetic men. She is, her comrades tell her, full of romantic error, for what she defines as cynicism in them is merely "a developed sense of reality." She is almost too willing to say, "I am wrong, I suppose I don't really understand the principles," and afterward she makes a secret truce with herself, determined not to surrender her will to such expedient logic. But she cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be, and at times she is almost contented to rest in this sense of grievance as a private store of consolation. Sometimes she wishes to run away, but she stays. Now she longs to fly out of this room, down the narrow stairs, and into the street where the houses lean together like conspirators under a single mottled lamp, and leave Braggioni singing to himself.

Instead she looks at Braggioni, frankly and clearly, like a good child who understands the rules of behavior. Her knees cling together under sound blue serge, and her round white collar is not purposely nun-like. She wears the uniform of an idea, and has renounced vanities. She was born Roman Catholic, and in spite of her fear of being seen by someone who might make a scandal of it, she slips now and again into some crumbling little church, kneels on the chilly stone, and says a Hail Mary on the gold rosary she bought in Tehuantepec. It is no good and she ends by examining the altar with its tinsel flowers and ragged brocades, and feels tender about the battered doll-shape of some male saint whose white, lace-trimmed drawers hang limply around his ankles below the hieratic dignity of his velvet robe. She has encased herself in a set of principles derived from her early training, leaving no detail of gesture or of personal taste untouched, and for this reason she will not wear lace made on machines. This is her private heresy, for in her special group the machine is sacred, and will be the salvation of the workers. She loves fine lace, and there is a tiny edge of fluted cobweb on this collar, which is one of twenty precisely alike, folded in blue tissue paper in the upper drawer of her clothes chest.

Braggioni catches her glance solidly as if he had been waiting for it, leans forward, balancing his paunch between his spread knees, and sings with tremendous emphasis, weighing his words. He has, the song relates, no father and no mother, nor even a friend to console him; lonely as a wave of the sea he comes and goes, lonely as a wave. His mouth opens round and yearns sideways, his balloon cheeks grow oily with the labor of song. He bulges marvelously in his expensive garments. Over his lavender collar, crushed upon a purple necktie, held by a diamond hoop: over his ammunition belt of tooled leather worked in silver, buckled cruelly around his gasping middle: over the tops of his glossy yellow shoes Braggioni swells with ominous ripeness, his mauve silk hose stretched taut, his ankles bound with the stout leather thongs of his shoes.

When he stretches his eyelids at Laura she notes again that his eyes are the true tawny yellow cat's eyes. He is rich, not in money, he tells her, but in power, and this power brings with it the blameless ownership of things, and the right to indulge his love of small luxuries. "I have a taste for the elegant refinements," he said once, flourishing a yellow silk handkerchief before her nose. "Smell that? It is Jockey Club, imported from New York." Nonetheless he is wounded by life. He will say so presently. "It is true everything turns to dust in the hand, to gall on the tongue." He sighs and his leather belt creaks like a saddle girth. "I am disappointed in everything as it comes. Everything." He shakes his head. "You, poor thing, you will be disappointed too. You are born for it. We are more alike than you realize in some things. Wait and see. Some day you will remember what I have told you, you will know that Braggioni was your friend."

Laura feels a slow chill, a purely physical sense of danger, a warning in her blood that violence, mutilation, a shocking death, wait for her with lessening patience. She has translated this fear into something homely, immediate, and sometimes hesitates before crossing the street. "My personal fate is nothing, except as the testimony of a mental attitude," she reminds herself, quoting from some forgotten philosophic primer, and is sensible enough to add, "Anyhow, I shall not be killed by an automobile if I can help it."

"It may be true I am as corrupt, in another way, as Braggioni," she thinks in spite of herself, "as callous, as incomplete," and if this is so, any kind of death seems preferable. Still she sits quietly, she does not run. Where could she go? Uninvited she has promised herself to this place; she can no longer imagine herself as living in another country, and there is no pleasure in remembering her life before she came here.

Precisely what is the nature of this devotion, its true motives, and what are its obligations? Laura cannot say. She spends part of her days in Xochimilco, near by, teaching Indian children to say in English, "The cat is on the mat." When she appears in the classroom they crowd about her with smiles on their wise, innocent, clay-colored faces, crying, "Good morning, my titcher!" in immaculate voices, and they make of her desk a fresh garden of flowers every day.

During her leisure she goes to union meetings and listens to busy important voices quarreling over tactics, methods, internal politics. She visits the prisoners of her own political faith in their cells, where they entertain themselves with counting cockroaches, repenting of their indiscretions, composing their memoirs, writing out manifestoes and plans for their comrades who are still walking about free, hands in pockets, sniffing fresh air. Laura brings them food and cigarettes and a little money, and she brings messages disguised in equivocal phrases from the men outside who dare not set foot in the prison for fear of disappearing into the cells kept empty for them. If the prisoners confuse night and day, and complain, "Dear little Laura, time doesn't pass in this infernal hole, and I won't know when it is time to sleep unless I have a reminder," she brings them their favorite narcotics, and says in a tone that does not wound them with pity, "Tonight will really be night for you," and though her Spanish amuses them, they find her comforting, useful. If they lose patience and all faith, and curse the slowness of their friends in coming to their rescue with money and influence, they trust her not to repeat everything, and if she inquires, "Where do you think we can find money, or influence?" they are certain to answer, "Well, there is Braggioni, why doesn't he do something?"

She smuggles letters from headquarters to men hiding from firing squads in back streets in mildewed houses, where they sit in tumbled beds and talk bitterly as if all Mexico were at their heels, when Laura knows positively they might appear at the band concert in the Alameda on Sunday morning, and no one would notice them. But Braggioni says, "Let them sweat a little. The next time they may be careful. It is very restful to have them out of the way for a while." She is not afraid to knock on any door in any street after midnight, and enter in the darkness, and say to one of these men who is really in danger: "They will be looking for you—seriously—tomorrow morning after six. Here is some money from Vicente. Go to Vera Cruz and wait."

She borrows money from the Roumanian agitator to give to his bitter enemy the Polish agitator. The favor of Braggioni is their disputed territory, and Braggioni holds the balance nicely, for he can use them both. The Polish agitator talks love to her over café tables, hoping to exploit what he believes is her secret sentimental preference for him, and he gives her misinformation which he begs her to repeat as the solemn truth to certain persons. The Roumanian is more adroit. He is generous with his money in all good causes, and lies to her with an air of ingenuous candor, as if he were her good friend and confidant. She never repeats anything they may say. Braggioni never asks questions. He has other ways to discover all that he wishes to know about them.

Nobody touches her, but all praise her gray eyes, and the soft, round under lip which promises gayety, yet is always grave, nearly always firmly closed: and they cannot understand why she is in Mexico. She walks back and forth on her errands, with puzzled eyebrows, carrying her little folder of drawings and music and school papers. No dancer dances more beautifully than Laura walks, and she inspires some amusing, unexpected ardors, which cause little gossip, because nothing comes of them. A young captain who had been a soldier in Zapata's army attempted, during a horseback ride near Cuernavaca, to express his desire for her with the noble simplicity befitting a rude folk-hero: but gently, because he was gentle. This gentleness was his defeat, for when he alighted, and removed her foot from the stirrup, and essayed to draw her down into his arms, her horse, ordinarily a tame one, shied fiercely, reared and plunged away. The young hero's horse careered blindly after his stable-mate, and the hero did not return to the hotel until rather late that evening. At breakfast he came to her table in full charro dress, gray buckskin jacket and trousers with strings of silver buttons down the leg, and he was in a humorous, careless mood. "May I sit with you?" and "You are a wonderful rider. I was terrified that you might be thrown and dragged. I should never have forgiven myself. But I cannot admire you enough for your riding!"

"I learned to ride in Arizona," said Laura.

"If you will ride with me again this morning, I promise you a horse that will not shy with you," he said. But Laura remembered that she must return to Mexico City at noon.

Next morning the children made a celebration and spent their playtime writing on the blackboard, "We lov ar ticher," and with tinted chalks they drew wreaths of flowers around the words. The young hero wrote her a letter: "I am a very foolish, wasteful, impulsive man. I should have first said I love you, and then you would not have run away. But you shall see me again." Laura thought, "I must send him a box of colored crayons," but she was trying to forgive herself for having spurred her horse at the wrong moment.

A brown, shock-haired youth came and stood in her patio one night and sang like a lost soul for two hours, but Laura could think of nothing to do about it. The moonlight spread a wash of gauzy silver over the clear spaces of the garden, and the shadows were cobalt blue. The scarlet blossoms of the Judas tree were dull purple, and the names of the colors repeated themselves automatically in her mind, while she watched not the boy, but his shadow, fallen like a dark garment across the fountain rim, trailing in the water. Lupe came silently and whispered expert counsel in her ear: "If you will throw him one little flower, he will sing another song or two and go away." Laura threw the flower, and he sang a last song and went away with the flower tucked in the band of his hat. Lupe said, "He is one of the organizers of the Typographers Union, and before that he sold corridos in the Merced market, and before that, he came from Guanajuato, where I was born. I would not trust any man, but I trust least those from Guanajuato."

She did not tell Laura that he would be back again the next night, and the next, nor that he would follow her at a certain fixed distance around the Merced market, through the Zócolo, up Francisco I. Madero Avenue, and so along the Paseo de la Reforma to Chapultepec Park, and into the Philosopher's Footpath, still with that flower withering in his hat, and an indivisible attention in his eyes.

Now Laura is accustomed to him, it means nothing except that he is nineteen years old and is observing a convention with all propriety, as though it were founded on a law of nature, which in the end it might well prove to be. He is beginning to write poems which he prints on a wooden press, and he leaves them stuck like handbills in her door. She is pleasantly disturbed by the abstract, unhurried watchfulness of his black eyes which will in time turn easily towards another object. She tells herself that throwing the flower was a mistake, for she is twenty-two years old and knows better; but she refuses to regret it, and persuades herself that her negation of all external events as they occur is a sign that she is gradually perfecting herself in the stoicism she strives to cultivate against that disaster she fears, though she cannot name it.

She is not at home in the world. Every day she teaches children who remain strangers to her, though she loves their tender round hands and their charming opportunist savagery. She knocks at unfamiliar doors not knowing whether a friend or a stranger shall answer, and even if a known face emerges from the sour gloom of that unknown interior, still it is the face of a stranger. No matter what this stranger says to her, nor what her message to him, the very cells of her flesh reject knowledge and kinship in one monotonous word. No. No. No. She draws her strength from this one holy talismanic word which does not suffer her to be led into evil. Denying everything, she may walk anywhere in safety, she looks at everything without amazement.

No, repeats this firm unchanging voice of her blood; and she looks at Braggioni without amazement. He is a great man, he wishes to impress this simple girl who covers her great round breasts with thick dark cloth, and who hides long, invaluably beautiful legs under a heavy skirt. She is almost thin except for the incomprehensible fullness of her breasts, like a nursing mother's, and Braggioni, who considers himself a judge of women, speculates again on the puzzle of her notorious virginity, and takes the liberty of speech which she permits without a sign of modesty, indeed, without any sort of sign, which is disconcerting.

"You think you are so cold, *gringita!* Wait and see. You will surprise yourself some day! May I be there to advise you!" He stretches his eyelids at her, and his ill-humored cat's eyes waver in a separate glance for the two points of light marking the opposite ends of a smoothly drawn path between the swollen curve of her breasts. He is not put off by that blue serge, nor by her resolutely fixed gaze. There is all the time in the world. His cheeks are bellying with the wind of song. "O girl with the dark eyes," he sings, and reconsiders. "But yours are not dark. I can change all that. O girl with the green eyes, you have stolen my heart away!" then his mind wanders to the song, and Laura feels the weight of his attention being shifted elsewhere. Singing thus, he seems harmless, he is quite harmless, there is nothing to do but sit patiently and say "No," when the moment comes. She draws a full breath, and her mind wanders also, but not far. She dares not wander too far.

Not for nothing has Braggioni taken pains to be a good revolutionist and a professional lover of humanity. He will never die of it. He has the malice, the cleverness, the wickedness, the sharpness of wit, the hardness of heart, stipulated for loving the world profitably. *He will never die of it.* He will live to see himself kicked out from his feeding trough by other hungry world-saviors. Traditionally he must sing in spite of his life which drives him to bloodshed, he tells Laura, for his father was a Tuscany peasant who drifted to Yucatan and married a Maya woman: a woman of race, an aristocrat. They gave him the love and knowledge of music, thus: and under the rip of his thumbnail, the strings of the instrument complain like exposed nerves.

Once he was called Delgadito by all the girls and married women who ran after him; he was so scrawny all his bones showed under his thin cotton clothing, and he could squeeze his emptiness to the very backbone with his two hands. He was a poet and the revolution was only a dream then; too many women loved him and sapped away his youth, and he could never find enough to eat anywhere, anywhere! Now he is a leader of men, crafty men who whisper in his ear, hungry men who wait for hours outside his office for a word with him, emaciated men with wild faces who waylay him at the street gate with a timid, "Comrade, let me tell you . . ." and they blow the foul breath from their empty stomachs in his face.

He is always sympathetic. He gives them handfuls of small coins from his own pocket, he promises them work, there will be demonstrations, they must join the unions and attend the meetings, above all they must be on the watch for spies. They are closer to him than his own brothers, without them he can do nothing—until tomorrow, comrade!

Until tomorrow. "They are stupid, they are lazy, they are treacherous, they would cut my throat for nothing," he says to Laura. He has good food and abundant drink, he hires an automobile and drives in the Paseo on Sunday morning, and enjoys plenty of sleep in a soft bed beside a wife who dares not disturb him; and he sits pampering his bones in easy billows of fat, singing to Laura, who knows and thinks these things about him. When he was fifteen, he tried to drown himself because he loved a girl, his first love, and she laughed at him. "A thousand women have paid for that," and his tight little mouth turns down at the corners. Now he perfumes his hair with Jockey Club, and confides to Laura: "One woman is really as good as another for me, in the dark. I prefer them all."

His wife organizes unions among the girls in the cigarette factories, and walks in picket lines, and even speaks at meetings in the evening. But she cannot be brought to acknowledge the benefits of true liberty. "I tell her I must have my freedom, net. She does not understand my point of view." Laura has heard this many times. Braggioni scratches the guitar and meditates. "She is an instinctively virtuous woman, pure gold, no doubt of that. If she were not, I should lock her up, and she knows it."

His wife, who works so hard for the good of the factory girls, employs part of her leisure lying on the floor weeping because there are so many women in the world, and only one husband for her, and she never knows where nor when to look for him. He told her: "Unless you can learn to cry when I am not here, I must go away for good." That day he went away and took a room at the Hotel Madrid.

It is this month of separation for the sake of higher principles that has been spoiled not only for Mrs. Braggioni, whose sense of reality is beyond criticism, but for Laura, who feels herself bogged in a nightmare. Tonight Laura envies Mrs. Braggioni, who is alone, and free to weep as much as she pleases about a concrete wrong. Laura has just come from a visit to the prison, and she is waiting for tomorrow with a bitter anxiety as if tomorrow may not come, but time may be caught immovably in this hour, with herself transfixed, Braggioni singing on forever, and Eugenio's body not yet discovered by the guard.

Braggioni says: "Are you going to sleep?" Almost before she can shake her head, he begins telling her about the May-day disturbances coming on in Morelia, for the Catholics hold a festival in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and the Socialists celebrate their martyrs on that day. "There will be two independent processions, starting from either end of town, and they will march until they meet, and the rest depends . . ." He asks her to oil and load his pistols. Standing up, he unbuckles his ammunition belt, and spreads it laden across her knees. Laura sits with the shells slipping through the cleaning cloth dipped in oil, and he says again he cannot understand why she works so hard for the revolutionary idea unless she loves some man who is in it. "Are you not in love with someone?" "No," says Laura. "And no one is in love with you?" "No." "Then it is your own fault. No woman need go begging. Why, what is the matter with you? The legless beggar woman in the Alameda has a perfectly faithful lover. Did you know that?"

Laura peers down the pistol barrel and says nothing, but a long, slow faintness rises and subsides in her; Braggioni curves his swollen fingers around the throat of the guitar and softly smothers the music out of it, and when she hears him again he seems to have forgotten her, and is speaking in the hypnotic voice he uses when talking in small rooms to a listening, close-gathered crowd. Some day this world, now seemingly so composed and eternal, to the edges of every sea shall be merely a tangle of gaping trenches, of crashing walls and broken bodies. Everything must be torn from its accustomed place where it has rotted for centuries, hurled skyward and distributed, cast down again clean as rain, without separate identity. Nothing shall survive that the stiffened hands of poverty have created for the rich and no one shall be left alive except the elect spirits destined to procreate a new world cleansed of cruelty and injustice, ruled by benevolent anarchy: "Pistols are good, I love them, cannon are even better, but in the end I pin my faith to good dynamite," he concludes, and strokes the pistol lying in her hands. "Once I dreamed of destroying this city, in case it offered resistance to General Ortíz, but it fell into his hands like an overripe pear."

He is made restless by his own words, rises and stands waiting. Laura holds up the belt to him: "Put that on, and go kill somebody in Morelia, and you will be happier," she says softly. The presence of death in the room makes her bold. "Today, I found Eugenio going into a stupor. He refused to allow me to call the prison doctor. He had taken all the tablets I brought him yesterday. He said he took them because he was bored."

"He is a fool, and his death is his own business," says Braggioni, fastening his belt carefully.

"I told him if he had waited only a little while longer, you would have got him set free," says Laura. "He said he did not want to wait."

"He is a fool and we are well rid of him," says Braggioni, reaching for his hat.

He goes away. Laura knows his mood has changed, she will not see him any more for a while. He will send word when he needs her to go on errands into strange streets, to speak to the strange faces that will appear, like clay masks with the power of human speech, to mutter their thanks to Braggioni for his help. Now she is free, and she thinks, I must run while there is time. But she does not go.

Braggioni enters his own house where for a month his wife has spent many hours every night weeping and tangling her hair upon her pillow. She is weeping now, and she weeps more at the sight of him, the cause of all her sorrows. He looks about the room. Nothing is changed, the smells are good and familiar, he is well acquainted with the woman who comes toward him with no reproach except grief on her face. He says to her tenderly: "You are so good, please don't cry any more, you dear good creature." She says, "Are you tired, my angel? Sit here and I will wash your feet." She brings a bowl of water, and kneeling, unlaces his shoes, and when from her knees she raises her sad eyes under her blackened lids, he is sorry for everything, and bursts into tears. "Ah, yes, I am hungry, I am tired, let us eat something together," he says, between sobs. His wife leans her head on his arm and says, "Forgive me!" and this time he is refreshed by the solemn, endless rain of her tears.

Laura takes off her serge dress and puts on a white linen nightgown and goes to bed. She turns her head a little to one side, and lying still, reminds herself that it is time to sleep. Numbers tick in her brain like little clocks, soundless doors close of themselves around her. If you would sleep, you must not remember anything, the children will say tomorrow, good morning, my teacher, the poor prisoners who come every day bringing flowers to their jailor. 1-2-3-4-5—it is monstrous to confuse love with revolution, night with day, life with death—ah, Eugenio!

The tolling of the midnight bell is a signal, but what does it mean? Get up, Laura, and follow me: come out of your sleep, out of your bed, out of this strange house. What are you doing in this house? Without a word, without fear she rose and reached for Eugenio's hand, but he eluded her with a sharp, sly smile and drifted away. This is not all, you shall see—Murderer, he said, follow me, I will show you a new country, but it is far away and we must hurry. No, said Laura, not unless you take my hand, no; and she clung first to the stair rail, and then to the topmost branch of the Judas tree that bent down slowly and set her upon the earth, and then to the rock ledge of a cliff, and then to the jagged wave of a sea that was not water but a desert of crumbling stone. Where are you taking me, she asked in wonder but without fear. To death, and it is a long way off, and we must hurry, said Eugenio. No, said Laura, not unless you take my hand. Then eat these flowers, poor prisoner, said Eugenio in a voice of pity, take and eat: and from the Judas tree he stripped the warm bleeding flowers, and held them to her lips. She saw that his hand was fleshless, a cluster of small white petrified branches, and his eye sockets were without light, but she ate the flowers greedily for they satisfied both hunger and thirst. Murderer! said Eugenio, and Cannibal! This is my body and my blood. Laura cried No! and at the sound of her own voice, she awoke trembling, and was afraid to sleep again.

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